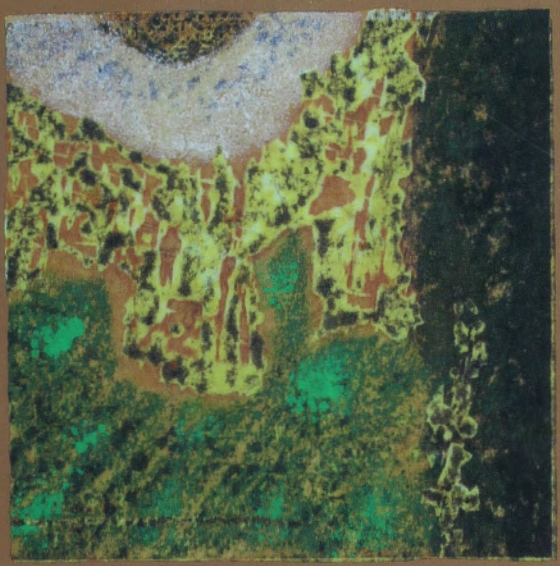
Sulfur 45/46

The Final Issue



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SPRING 2000

A LITERARY BI-ANNUAL OF THE WHOLE ART

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COVER: "Cave V" by William Paden, hanga wood cut, 1999; shown actual size; 3 x 3"

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CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

INTRODUCTION

I had been talking with Jerome Rothenberg and Robert Kelly, among others, about the need for another Caterpillar-like magazine that would engage multiple aspects of innovative contemporary poetry in the context of international modernism. Because the California Institute of Technology is primarily dedicated to, and known for, research in science and engineering, I proposed in 1981, while Dreyfuss Poet in Residence and Lecturer in Creative Writing, that a literary magazine, sponsored by the Humanities Division, would draw attention to the humanities at Cal Tech (I did so in somewhat the same spirit that Charles Olson, when rector, proposed to other faculty members at Black Mountain College in 1953 that a magazine might effectively advertise the nature of the college's program). Roger Noll, an economist who was then Director of the Humanities Division at Cal Tech, liked my idea and arranged with President Goldberger for Sulfur to be supported initially for five years.

The word "sulfur" evokes the sulphur, a butterfly with black-bordered orange and yellow wings. On one level, the magazine is an evolution of Caterpillar (a magazine I founded and edited 20 issues of from 1967 to 1973). On other levels, the word denotes alchemical initiational combustion, and excited or inflamed language. The word was also attractive to me because it had not been used before as a literary magazine title. There is an extended note on the word at the beginning of Sulfur #24.

The magazine originally appeared three times a year but became a biannual in 1988. Its more than 11,000 pages of material have included around 800 contributors, some 200 of which are foreign writers and artists. I began Sulfur with Robert Kelly as the sole contributing editor. Kelly disappeared due to a misunderstanding after the first issue appeared, and by the third issue, Michael Palmer, Rothenberg, and Eliot Weinberger had become the contributing editors. Throughout Sulfur's run, Caryl Eshleman has been the managing editor; she took over the magazine's design from Barbara Martin with #37. Over the years the masthead grew to its current sixteen members. Nearly all of

this group have stayed on from the time they came aboard, and all, in one way or another, have contributed actively to what Sulfur has become (in contrast to the lists of well-known names that often decorate literary magazine mastheads). Sulfur is not, and has never been, a movement magazine. I invited people to join on the basis of believing that they were very good at their chosen focus, and took the chance that while there would be real disagreements among us (see #20 and #22 for the Language Poetry controversy), we had enough in common and were all sufficiently united against "official verse culture" (effectively examined by Charles Bernstein in #10) to be able to work together.

The magazine came close to being derailed on two occasions. In 1983, I was informed by President Goldberger that there was a crisis based on the following incident: he had been using discretionary funds from the Weingart Foundation in Pasadena to support Sulfur. At one point he proudly showed the Weingart Board of Trustees a copy of #4 which included 22 Paul Blackburn poems (which would later appear, with many others, in *The Parallel Voyages,* Sun-gemini Press, 1987). One of these elderly trustees opened the magazine to Blackburn's "Birds chirp listlessly in the heat" and read it aloud to those assembled. They were outraged, and told Goldberger that Sulfur was pornographic. Not only did they not want their "discretionary" funds used to support the magazine, they wanted Cal Tech's name removed too. Goldberger told me that as much as he disagreed with this reaction, he had to honor it because of the Weingart Foundation's huge yearly donations to the Institute (mainly in the science area, I recall, but it should be mentioned that this foundation also funded a yearly "Humanities Conference" on campus). Goldberger, quite honorably I felt, offered to make good on his original five year funding commitment via other sources, so Sulfur could continue either on its own for a few years or until it attracted a new sponsor. While the Blackburn poem is genuinely shocking, it is hardly pornographic by current standards. That a single poem by this shy, unassertive poet was sufficient to nearly eliminate a literary magazine on grounds of censorship in 1983 should keep us all alert to the fact that while things seem to change, on another level, they remain stuck, and the same.

Sulfur #9, which appeared shortly after the Weingart incident, was one of the two issues without a sponsoring organization. #10 through #15 (1984-1986) were sponsored by The Writers Program in the UCLA Extension Program. In 1986, Karen Costello, who made the connection possible, left the Program and the new Director decided that Sulfur's "office benefits" imposed too much of a burden on the Program's budget. Thus #16 was published out of our home in West Los

Angeles. In 1986, when I became a professor in the English Department at Eastern Michigan University, I brought Sulfur with me. From #17 on, EMU has provided me with release time (one course per semester), a part-time graduate assistant, and "office benefits." These "benefits" have not included money for production, promotion, nor payments to authors and contributing editors. While the magazine's subscribers (around 700 at this point) and bookstore sales have off-set some of these expenses, from the mid-1980s to 1996 most of the deficit was made up by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. When we failed to get a grant in the last round of literary magazine support, we seriously considered ending Sulfur, but we did not want to be put out of business by the NEA. We have done issues #37 through #45/46 on a reduced basis, cutting down the magazine's size and press run (which meant dropping distributors which were costing us money), and stopping contributor payments. We are ending Sulfur now because we feel that the magazine has expanded and realized its initial purposes as much as is possible. I will turn 65 shortly after this issue is published and feel it is time to turn my focus solely on my own writing.

In regard to editing and content: associate editors have regularly sent me their own work, or the work of others. More often than not, I have published this work. When I was divided over such contributions (or material sent directly by would-be contributors), I sent it to three associate editors and abided by majority decision. This policy has enabled work to get into the magazine via other editors—in particular, Palmer and Weinberger—through "lateral entry." It has avoided many of the problems that occur with large editorial boards where a number of people vote on everything. Group editorial consensus tends to weed out the eccentric and the complex, filling issues with material that puzzles or offends no one.

While we occasionally published a piece of fiction when it seemed appropriate, for the most part we steered clear of fiction and drama, as it was not possible, given size restraints, to edit such material in a responsible way. The range of Sulfur's interests in poetry, poetics, and some tangential fields, made it difficult to keep issues under 200 pages. The amount of good material always determined the size of an issue; very little was held over for future issues. Here were our main focuses:

1] Translations of contemporary foreign-language poets and new translations of untranslated (or poorly translated) older works. We always checked the accuracy of the work of unknown translators. Literary magazines that restrict themselves to a national literature deprive themselves of the international network of information and cross-fertilization that is at the heart of 20th century world poetry.

2] Archival materials—unpublished, significant writings—by earlier writers, in Sulfur's case including: Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Hart Crane, Mina Loy, Basil Bunting, Lorine Niedecker, George Oppen, Charles Olson, Edward Dahlberg and Francis Boldereff. Writers sometimes mis-evaluate or abandon significant works that if not destroyed end up in archival collections at university libraries (a great service to the literary community would be to have a checklist of all American archival holdings; the range and depth would astonish everyone). In the same spirit that living poets share international affiliations, the living are also connected to, and continue to learn from, the "great dead." To include writers of the past as a dimension of the present openly affirms such affiliations.

3] The inclusion of several unknown and usually young poets in each issue. An effective literary magazine gives the impression that anyone, with the right goods, can be a part of it, and that when you turn a page you may find a poem by Karen Kelley or Dan Featherston facing one by Gary Snyder or Adrienne Rich. If the work of the "great dead" is to be included, then the work of the talented and untested should have a place too. A novice can learn something about his own efforts by scrutinizing them in a context with mature writers.

4] Commentary, including poetics, notes, and book reviews (of a polemical as well as non-disputational nature). A crucial difference between a literary magazine and an anthology is that magazines comment on what is being published. Journals that do not publish reviews (or only publish pastel appreciations) evade revealing, and defending, a specific aesthetic viewpoint and become collection plates into which any contribution can be dropped. Certain aspects of poetry hone themselves on conflict and strife, and a literary magazine is an ideal site for the contestation of differing views.

5] Resource materials. Depending on the editor, and the availability, resource materials can vary widely. If poetry is the woof of a magazine, non-poetic source material might be the warp. The idea here is that vital writing is always dependent upon materials outside of its own discipline for the renewal and deepening of content, of extending what might be called the cleared ground of the art. Originality depends not only on voicing and technique, but on making writing responsible for previously excluded (and repressed) materials and experience. In Sulfur's case, such materials included art, art criticism, archetypal psychology, anthropology, archeology, and political commentary.

These five areas of attention (along with poetry and prose by well-known American poets) made up what could be thought of as Sulfur's personality. In a typical 225 page issue, there might be 40 to 60 pages

of commentary, several translation and art sections, and one or two archival or resource sections. Weinberger edited a special issue (#33), "Into The Past." Marjorie Perloff and Jenny Penberthy did a special issue on Anglophone Poetry and Poetics Outside the US and UK (#44). James Clifford edited and translated much of a large section on Michel Leiris (#15). Rachel Blau DuPlessis edited three presentations of George Oppen's working papers (in #25, 26, and 27). Jerry Glenn edited a large section of and on Paul Celan (#11). Caryl and I put together a group of responses to the tragic death of Ana Mendieta (#22), and with Gyula Kodolanyi, I co-translated and edited a section on Hungarian poetry (#21). Smaller sections were done on Blackburn (#4), Antonin Artaud (#9), Porfirio diDonna (#19), East German poetry (#27), Peruvian photography (#34), and the Vancouver Robin Blaser conference (#37). Sulfur #32 (at 352 pages, the largest single issue) was filled with work and edited sections by the masthead. Caryl and I also worked with Sulfur's various art editors: John Yau, Pamela Wye, and Roberto Tejada. Over 600 paintings, drawings, photographs, and sculptures were reproduced in the magazine (and on the covers), in most cases with essays or notes.

The background against which Sulfur proposed itself is anchored in the Dionysian 1960s. As crazy as the period was, with its blissful and horrendous wave-bands compounded of revolution, war, mindful and mindless introspection, it was the richest period for American poetry since the 1920s. Many of the poets of my generation experienced visionary and political internationalism as a multifoliate force spinning itself out in translations, alternative presses and magazines, enthusiastic college audiences, Vietnam War Protest, traditional magics and a heady confidence articulated by Norman O. Brown at the end of his brilliant 1966 *Love's Body:* "The antimony between mind and body, word and deed, speech and silence, overcome. Everything is only a metaphor; there is only poetry." In fact, I'm sure that I am not alone in believing during the late 1960s that an American poetry based in international modernism, and signaled by Don Allen's "the new American poetry" but not restricted to his perimeters, might become the dominant poetry of the 1970s—in other words, that a world-aware, responsible avant-garde might overcome and peripheralize decades of dominant official verse culture. After all, the impact of the work of Charles Olson was equal in its own way to that of Francis Bacon, so why shouldn't Olson occupy a place in poetry equal to that of Bacon in painting?

Dionysian excess has, built within its boundary explosions, formlessness, violence, and despair. Dionysus must, at some point in his

turmoil, find the hand of brother Apollo and swing with him, or be churned to flotsam. For me, there has always been a loose, sinister synchronicity between the crash of hippydom and popular culture (the Manson murders in Los Angeles, the debacle of The Rolling Stones' Altamont concert) and Olson's death in 1970, preceded by Robert Duncan's withdrawal and refusal to publish for the next fifteen years. The 70s flipped over, the energy dispersed.

Two obvious trends of the 1970s and 1980s were the ubiquitous spread of creative writing degree programs and Language Poetry. Of equal magnitude, but less discussed, was the development of a number of poets in their 40s, 50s and 60s. Women poets re/visioned not only the American canon but the heretofore unacknowledged patriarchal government of the history of poetry. There appeared a host of minority-oriented poetries: African-American, Indian, Chicano, gay, lesbian, performance, and many mixes, involving music and libretto, chants, and soundtexts. What was once upon a time a Right and a Left Bank (the cooked vs. raw distinction, suspect even in the 60s) became an archipelago of sites.

One reason that Olson has not become a Bacon-like presence is that American (and English) poetry has depended upon academic sanction and support. What was true for Whitman, shunned by most of the "men of letters" of his time, is still true for almost all poets today. Students buy text anthologies and read poetry because it is part of the curriculum. Doctors and lawyers do not, in any noticeable sense, but many, in a very noticeable way, collect paintings—and not merely because wealth is involved, but because paintings (and most novels, plays, and films) offer more surface than poetry. They demand a less active response. One has to work hard to get anything out of *The Cantos, The Waste-land,* or *The Maximus Poems.* In such works, there is no plot, or color field to provide an entrance level that can be bypassed by the ideal observer or just relaxed into.

By creating a "poet-professor" middle class, the writing programs have played into the hands of poetry's traditional enemies: education and entertainment. The slams and open-mike readings are offsprings of, or reactions to, the creative writing classes and courses based on Norton anthologies. It is wonderful for students to have contact with writers but I continue to believe that such contact should not take place in workshops dominated by student work and response. All of a student's time in literature should be involved with getting a small percentage of it under his belt, and coming to terms with what, in my view, poetry is really about: the extending of human consciousness, making conscious the unconscious, creating a symbolic consciousness that in its finest moments overcomes the dualities in which the human

world is cruelly and eternally, it seems, enmeshed.

While Sulfur has attempted to not support work that smacks of the creative writing workshops, we have published many Language Poets. An interesting anthology of Language Poetry, in fact, could be assembled from what has appeared in Sulfur's pages. Charles Bernstein is one of our correspondents, and other Sulfur editors are associated to varying degrees with the movement. I regard Language Poetry as a significant part of contemporary poetry but not as its primary force or focus (I don't think there is one; I think there are a couple dozen major figures today, and that they make up a crazy-quilt of emphases and directions).

Sulfur's primary ambition, as I see it, has been to keep the field open and complex, with archival and contemporary writing, along with commentary, generating a multi-generational interplay. Besides advancing the work of a number of poets in their 30s and 40s, the magazine has supported a range of those whose work has either held its significance or deepened over the 80s and 90s. Along with certain Sulfur editors, such a range would include Robin Blaser, Adrienne Rich, Jackson Mac Low, Gary Snyder, Gerrit Lansing, Amiri Baraka, Philip Lamantia, Ron Padgett, Robert Duncan, Barbara Guest, Ron Padgett, and Gustaf Sobin.

For this last issue, I solicited work from 150 past contributors. In the case of artists, when it was possible, I simply asked for recent material. In the case of writers, I asked for unpublished things that they felt represented them well at the present time. No attempt was made to elicit testimonials. I asked everyone to try to hold their contribution to two Sulfur pages. I think it is a gala issue, and that in spite of some omissions (mainly due to death and disappearances), it projects a constellation that is true to Sulfur's over-all image.

D.H. Lawrence once wrote: "Living, I want to depart to where I am." As it has been able to, Sulfur has carried forth the ore in such a thought.

—January 2000

WILL ALEXANDER

TWO POEMS *from* THE SRI LANKAN LOXODROME

WITHIN A MORE INTENSE THALASSIC

A spark from ambrosian leper fields
like darkened lightning fauna quivering
implying the force
of electricuted mass

one can never conclude
that the azoic exists
in the fiendish realm of isopods
in stunned Cambodian rivers
engorged with bloodless sea trouts
building nests of stone
from exhaustive breeding positions

& so I can say
that a Parrot Fish burns
that a populated squid equates with Medusas

or herring silhouettes
or mackerals ignited as darkened hydrogen biology
like an irradiated "pseudomorph"
oceanic with retinas

I think
of "an undescribed species of Praya"
or a monstrous protochordate
with its subdivided tail
shedding itself

like imaginary asps into the blankness
creating from its phantoms
a pre-existant methane form
or an acorn visage
or a buoyant carbohydrate

& all these sums
incandescent
whirling
emitting their powers
from the depth of "hydrozoan medusae"

A NEXUS OF PHANTOMS

In a lorikeet cave
motions exist of disintegrated swans
in a translocated lake
brimming with harvested poisons
sealed by corruptive post-mortems

such swans
staggered by microbial reasoning
their aggressive nests
anatomical with anomaly
with drifts of strenuous incarnadine leanings
with a thirst which hurtles conspiratorial invasives
alive
with coronal oceanics
open
like a clouded trail of rendings

analogous
with the "Auks" the pelicans the mergansers

perhaps
with "the petrols & the "gannets"
under the power of darted mocking orations

the swans
looking back on solemn blood perusal
like a form of death breaking roses on a shore

it is the examples of phonograms
of lost & compacted lenses
turning
within a charismatic "Fall Line"
or an "isoneph"
or what an avian would announce in Greenland
as a stray "Kabatic Wind"

the swans
like a haze of magnetism
or implied gondola locations
where the scent of each lorikeet is consumed
& brought to dazzling eclipse refulgence

in another foci
in another depth
their form self-challenged
in a cloak of suns
their power de-revealed
with 7 moons burning
reduced to 2 intense incendiary magnets

& these incendiary magnets
like a nexus of phantoms
scattered across a geometric optometry

BRUCE ANDREWS

SNOWPONY

If if if. To tastest pinkish hypno hormone prowl. A copycat neverneverland. A jumpcut neverneverland. SEE WHAT NOT WHY DID DON'T. BIG NOISE. . .picking up your blur. Kitsch crisco–kookery; betcha goo, fill in the blinks. . . .Hello, aorta. Pixel bustier: *yo* to aloha skeletal kickbacks–you're the organgrinder here. Roughhouse too zippy. Fête accompli, scatter invents–diagonal with some shag pixie yessified, slantland redemptivitis. What I want is. . .how it isn't.

Ballroom say-so, props that cheat; chewy furniture, spellbound hellhound. Hot buttered anything pulp your tact. One toy wish: you are one tasty thing. Marinated optimism, popeye dada–I'm characterizing, O.K.? You're in the wrong species. Ipso-fiasco, naughty by nurture–literacy is boss. Va va voom, ape the usual. Bleep of the century, moody to max. Fluffy. . .accurate. . .*big bam!*

Don't play with my underwire. Speak to the bite. Show me the giblets, sling onto brain. Make me blow my whistle. Unwilling to take interpersonal risks–girlish, cooperative. . .the heart runs errands. Lace hands behind head. Retinal wig-out misterioso–three-headedness. We ain't going to give it back. Splashfest: chaosophy–buh-bye, buh-bye torsofuck run amoks. Failing your anger management tutorial? Ain't we got a right? Fuzzy your rabbit, cut to the choice. You have beautiful minutiae. Jingle-bells, come flip the future. Or *don't feed this animal.* We could be less bubbly. We could be party-lighting. We could form teams.

Ho.
Che. Sudsiest
Orbitizzy, red-light never skins one.
(Winkwink say no more.)
Little extras. . .catnip mountains.
Mind your own candystore.

You're *styling;* you're *money—*
Relax, dear. Surveillance does that to me—in the
Past. . .tense. . .is so possessive. Sizzleable
Membrane jalapeno—in the U.S.S.A.
Chuckleheader—mosh clit.
Ting-aling. . .fi-nal-ly. Prognosis licked clean. Power
Makes me think. Ecstatic syntax, post-glitching. Pillow verticals,
Jubilee per crush. Make a faucet with your fist, squeeze me another
Boundary. Mapping the slurp: exersissy beefheart cupcake. A lovebite
Set-up, performative hula.
HANDWRITTEN TYPO. . .JUSTIFY THE NIGHT. The
I, that empty suit. Slang pupae, larger bounce, parentheses
Standing at attention. *Son montuno, guaguanco.* Let me be
Your prisoner of war. Biology of tomorrow. Raw
Toyish jackpot giggle—who blew the whistle on the pompoms. Smile
That. Sultrier obsessiveness. Chiffon protein. Gimmicks
Go platinum, bigger bigger milking *ritmo* optimo squiggle. I will
Opt. Lickedysplit, bust up the muzzle. Stutterstepping
Banquet—a teddy in denial.

A pronoun hostess. Not *that* you would. . .
Not that you *would. . .*
Not that you would. . .
Not that *you* would.
Adorado,
Fire next time.
Gag me a transition, toss off the blink.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

ACROSS EUROPE

(Trans. from the French
by Ron Padgett)

To Mr. Ch.

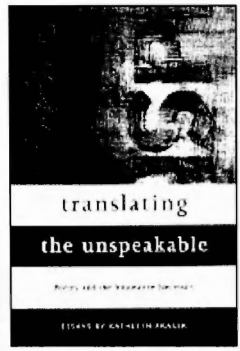
Rotsoge
Your scarlet face your biplane that can change into a seaplane
Your round house where a smoked herring swims
I need the key to eyelids
Fortunately we saw Mr. Panado
And we're reassured on that account
What do you see my old Mr. D. . .
90 or 324 a man in the air a calf that looks through its
mother's belly

I searched a long time on the road
So many eyes are closed along the road
Open open open open open up
The old man is washing his feet in a basin
Una volta ho inteso dire Chè vuoi
I started to cry remembering all your childhoods
And you alone showed me a terrifying shade of violet

This little painting with a car in it reminded me of one day
A day made of pieces mauve yellow blue green and red
In which I was going out to the country with a charming
chimney her dog on a leash
It's all gone you don't have your kazoo anymore
Far away the charming smokestack is smoking her Russian
cigarettes
The dog is barking at the lilacs
The night lamp has burned out

Petals have fallen on the dress
Two gold rings near the sandals
In the sun have caught fire
But your hair is the trolley
Going across Europe dressed in little multicolored lights

NEW



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RAE ARMANTROUT

SYSTEMIC

What the pulse flushes.

Research indicates
that the shift

from cars to trucks
reflects a desire

for solid
conviction.

Day breaks.
Dog's bark shoots

through the soles of my feet
to my crotch.

*

There *was* light
and I was trying to catch up,

to understand what had happened
retrospectively

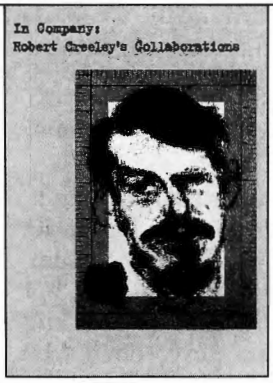
by barking
appropriate commands.

This season
frozen hoopla

will ornament
exchanges.

Calls to worship
disposable stand-ins

appear
in every hand.



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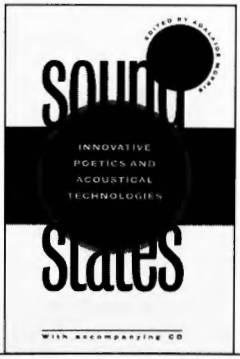

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ANTONIN ARTAUD

REVOLT AGAINST POETRY

(Trans. from the French by Clayton Eshleman)

We have never been able to write without triggering an incarnation of the soul, but it was already formed, and not by us, when we entered into poetry.

The poet who writes is concerned with the Word and the Word has its laws. It is in the poet's unconscious to believe automatically in these laws. He believes himself to be free and he is not free.

*

There is something behind his head, around the ears of his thought. Something is budding in his nape, where it existed even before he began. He is the son of his works, perhaps, but his works are not of him, for what there is of himself in his poetry was put there not by him, but by this unconscious producer of life who chose him as its poet and whom he himself did not choose. And who has never been well disposed toward him.

*

I don't want to be the poet of my poet, of that ego that wanted to appoint me poet, but the poet creator, in rebellion against the ego and the self. And I remember the ancient rebellion against the forms that advanced against me.

*

It is through the revolt against the ego and the self that I rid myself of all the evil incarnations of the Word which were never anything more for man than a compromise of cowardice and of illusion and who knows what abject fornication between cowardice and illusion. And I don't want a word that comes from who knows what astral libido that was totally conscious of the formations of my desire in myself.

My gratitude to Deborah Treisman for crucial corrections in a draft of this translation.

*

There is in the forms of the human Word some predatory operation, some predatory self-consumption in which the poet, focusing on the object, sees himself eaten by that object.

A crime weighs on the Word made flesh, but the crime is in having admitted it. Libido is animal thought and it was the animals who, one day, were changed into men.

*

The word produced by men is the idea of an invert buried by the animal reflexes of things and who, through the martyrdom of time and of things, has forgotten that the word was invented.

The invert is a man who eats his self and expects his self to nourish him, he seeks his mother in his self and wants to keep her for himself. The primitive crime of incest is the enemy of poetry and the killer of its immaculate poetry.

*

I don't want to eat my poem, but I want to give my heart to my poem and what is my heart to my poem. My heart is what isn't me. To give one's self to one's poem is also to risk being raped by it. And if I am Virgin for my poem, it should remain virgin for me.

*

I am that forgotten poet, who one day saw himself fall into matter, and the matter will not devour me, not me.

I don't want those aging reflexes, product of an ancient incest due to an animal ignorance of the Virgin law of life. Ego and self are those catastrophic states of being in which Living Man allows himself to be imprisoned by the forms of himself that he perceives. To love the ego is to love a corpse and the law of the Virgin is infinity. The unconscious producer of ourselves is that of an ancient copulator who indulges in the basest of magics and who has discovered a magic in the infamy of endlessly reducing oneself to oneself in order to make a word emerge from a cadaver. The libido is the definition of that cadaverous desire and fallen man is an inverted criminal.

*

I am that primitive made unhappy by the inexpiable horror of things. I don't want to reproduce myself in things, but I want things to be produced by me. I don't want an idea of the ego in my poem and I don't want to recognize myself in it.

*

My heart is that eternal Rose that grew from the magic power of the initial Cross. The one who crucified himself in Himself and for Himself never came back to himself. Never, for this himself through which he sacrificed Himself he also offered to Life after having himself forced it to become the being of his own life.

*

I want only forever to be that poet who sacrificed himself in the Kabbala of the self to the immaculate conception of things.

—Rodez, 1944

JEAN-PAUL AUXEMERY

FLAME IN THE DESERT

(Trans. from the French
by Nathaniel Tarn)

The road
takes us along

the line of the dune's ridge
stays firm under our feet

on the plain hip beats against goatskin
and pace scans rhythmically that patient thirst

this sun thinks high, his strength convinces
this sun instructs us about our drawn-out duty

at stop, bodies collapse, at night
this whole effort to follow and exhaust thins out

eye bronzes over, lamp oil discourses,
a new indulgent day comes out to birth,

& the wing of Ghazali's butterfly
caught in the fire's silk:

he is flame's lover,
he feeds on this dawn's light
as long as distant, Corbin is quoting

—soon as he nears
morning illumination
transforms and changes him

becomes himself flame's sustenance–

Flame weaves through him flame's way:

he is in turn his own self's nourishment
become the object of his own desire.

***

Devoured by this jealous fire we are entranced
our desire sees us as distant, furrows us where we are.

Ladder from a well's depth mounts and descends,
lamp follows moving multiples of miners' bodies.

Eyes climb, with muffled bodies crawling.

Butterfly's flame burns, looking through the night
at the wing light and slow which breathes,

–it's herself,
the archangel's purple wing envelops.

***

Desert's well – inverted sky:
algorithms, sources, gazes.
Water of light drowns this long weariness–
degrees fade out, we go on down, we march
we go on down, we sink, we go bring up from depth
water of light, we go on down, degrees
are our solid grounded steps–now we are sunk,
we are in depth of depths, flame is that source.

Our thirst, our patience,–their equation.

AMIRI BARAKA

SATURDAY SCHOOL

Where plays the steeple the people the simple episodes of what
Is not yet in sight. Though you fight, and have the might
The things you seek are not yet in sight
Not quite, but look again, past your own limitations
To the heavings and great impulses that sway and shift
And befuddle this nation. Not yet old enough to be fully seen
Just Bashes of brilliance amidst the steady beat the criminally obscene
For all that, and yet, here in eternity, with Marx and Lenin, Mao and
Them. Fred and the Good Dr, With Paul Robeson, Nkrumah, Nat
Turner, Margaret Walker, Cabral, Ida B, Fanny Lou, Tubman, Ho Chi
Minh, Toussaint, Maceo, Malcolm, Lu Shun,
Zora and all, here is a sense, that what we do is just begun, and till you
see another place what you call space, and it be there, visible as where
your leg ends, you will you be, all thee
For whom seeing is yet in the future, with freedom and consciousness,
Hewers of wood, and carriers of soil, De classed Monkeys, a full
decimal away from Human, a whole turn of the world from civilization,
Got a unicycle in the bicycle show, Went from idol to idle but you still

ain't hip to idyll. Did go from four legs to three legs, but that made you
a lame, Don't dig the square is on the bottom, and the point goes all the
way out, and the pyramids, three sides four times, is History and The
futures describing a hora, why the music is in time and the sound is in
space, and the sun is in its raise, and infinity never finishes, so there is
no starting line. That each bullet of our being, our isness and areness is
the color of our story and whoever we are not, just to fly again within it
is the you we ask of I. Could you, would you, when you dig whose
thinking and why the self is gone, That each increment and motion,
Each (visible self of) change is mirrored in the everywhere, as sound
and color and smell and taste and feeling, the Angels of Information
Reformation, vast Engels of the whole being, as it books and Tranes and
splits, from out to in, from un to seen, gone from here, arriving there.
That it is the soul, that travels, a being and spirit reflect of the Sun, who
we are the creations of, the Eve, the Am, The Are, Is Is. And One-Eyed
Jack,worships the dead body hewed ignorant from stone, now sleeps
Inside the pulse of the path where he goes. Were we to spend our time
digging the actual the natural the truth and we own beings, to born the
other eye, ourselves reflection. Come out from behind the veil, the

nothing mythology hiding the world, so we float in ignorant
mist
Insisting our animal cravings make us human, when we plead
in
metaphysical desperation for the real, and we hover above it,
on it
actually, we cannot see that where our leg ends, our feet like
all of
nature touch, always, the truth. If we touch it with our souls,
the
bottom of our shoes, our soles, for some the heels.

—1998

SUSAN BEE

TWO PAINTINGS

Beware the Lady, 1999
Mixed media & collage on linen; 50 x 40"

Her Candle Burns Hot, 1999
Oil & collage on linen; 48 x 34"

STEPHEN BARBER

THE DEVILISHNESS OF THE HUMAN BODY: AUGUST WALLA

For any artist who now makes images of the human figure in Europe, a crucial question must be how much of the visual sensation and the multiple layers of Europe's recent history will be compulsively inserted—by accident or design—within all imageries of the body. As Europe enters a phase of escalating disintegration, its artists are increasingly confronted by the power of the body as a channel into the intricate situation of an endangered and uncertain existence. At other moments of profound creative obsession with the body, such as Paris at the end of the 1940s, the preoccupation with physical material was based around the desire to penetrate into its structures, to discover new corporeal dimensions, to reveal the astonishment of a new image of the body. Such a world bound into the projection of the physical might be irreparably fractured, like that of Artaud, or swarming with the mass of faces which transfixed Henri Michaux, but it remained an authentic world of the reinvented body. By contrast, the events of 1989 and the subsequent decade of acute upheaval in central and eastern Europe have created a new preoccupation with the body as the anguished subject of a sudden historical blackout; an imagery of the body is emerging in which existence is sutured together out of the accumulating collection of anxieties which make up the artist's perceptual resources. Over that last decade, the scars of the Second World War have been unscreened and set into violent collision with the present moment; the images emerging catch the panoramic trajectories of this collision, and concentrate them into the presentation of the assailed human body.

As a child in eastern Austria during the Second World War, the artist August Walla lived in isolation with his mother. Since his father was permanently absent and he had no contact with men, when August heard Hitler speaking on the radio, he assumed that this was the voice of his father. At school, he liked to declare that 'Everything red is devilish,' and he narrowly avoided being sent to a concentration camp. As a young man, he began to paint on every surface he encountered—television sets, furniture, roads, trees—revealing a joint preoccupation

with the body and with history. The body was always Walla's, but transformed from identity to identity, multiplied and multi-sexualized, under the pressure of the history which terrorized him. Walla's inhabitation by the turmoil of European war and its dominant role in the creation of his identity led to the use of symbols surrounding his imagery of the body and determining its nature and sexuality—swastikas and hammer-and-sickles proliferated and extended out to mythical and religious signs; the bodies he painted were split between possessing these symbols—as physical attributes emanating from the creative act in order to fill and secure the world—and being catastrophically robbed of identity by them. When Walla's mother became too ill to care for him, he arrived as a voluntary patient at the renowned Artists' House, a center of creative experimentation established in the grounds of the Lower Austria mental hospital near Vienna, where he works incessantly, his preoccupations fueled by magazine and televisual imagery.

It is largely through this isolation and retirement from life in society that Walla's paintings work as a sensitive seismography for the upheaval of the body in Europe. His paintings demonstrate a compulsion to produce an open, unending narrative about the dangers to the body which he vividly perceives: conflagration, mass murder, dismemberment of populations. For Walla, the world is menaced by an imminent and total fragmentation, and it is the work of the body to collect and show these fears. Walla's prolific output has an interchangeable feel to it, each painting presenting a set of the irresolvable and aggravated elements of a tenuous human existence. The space of the painting is a saturated arena of combat between the figure and whatever forces come to obliterate it; the dynamics of the image are governed by impulsion and expulsion—Walla's body is a meticulously designed set of expressive orifices, which expel fluids and substances as a way of combating physical extinguishment. The death of the body is the thing to be feared most, just as the death of history may result from an excess of atrocity. In distancing himself from the banal detail of life, Walla has been able to remove the mediation between the vulnerable human body and the integrally oppressive, engulfing world of Europe—thus investing his work with a poignant directness and an aura of extremity.

Walla is a compiler and creator of textual as well as physical languages; his paintings are streaked with exclamatory texts which enumerate the splinters of identity that are generated by the volatile image of his body. Besides Walla's own name, those of Hitler, Stalin and German political leaders are frequently cited, together with those of archaic historical figures, and of religious figures (angels, Satan—Walla views himself as living in a half-hell, an interstice of limbo between self

and history, between language and raw image, between death and resuscitation). Others of his texts are taken from a reading from dictionaries and media sources, words selected for their sonorous and rhythmic power; the texts are multilingually compounded—mashed and intermingled to form bizarre ejaculatory units of language. Walla's painting is gestural—each gesture generated from a desire to retaliate violently against the precariousness of existence, as well as from the exhilaration which such a situation necessarily engenders. Walla's gesture cements text and image around an individual obsessional content of corporeality and self-focussed sexuality; gesture becomes the manual projectile which amalgamates the visual and the textual, into an image possessing resistance against the effusive dangers to the corporeal identity of the artist.

As with all artists whose worlds are in perpetual upheaval, Walla is a great fabricator of identity. From the debris of his self, he has constructed a carapace of myth and omniscience around his capacity to multiply and metamorphose his physical identity. His painting depicts a set of instruments and defensive totems which have been extracted from the body, to guard against the catastrophic intrusion of external forces which may bring to the body its loss, chaos and death, in the form of a mortal invasion of the deified and unique space of the body. For these threats to be subjugated, Walla's obsession with survival must manifestly be made real, through the insistence and the repetition of the image. Walla's self becomes imprinted everywhere around the site of his body (through, for example, painting on roadways) as the means of securing the self's existence; the body makes its incursion from private obsessionality, back out into the exterior space of the world. In this work of surviving in the world through an imagery of the body, Walla has created an immediate and unique corporeal language.

The ongoing upheaval of central and eastern Europe has made all artists and writers there doubt their father's voice as void and illusory, and has compelled them to interrogate their identities and creative sources with urgency. The rise of neo-fascism in countries such as Austria, compounded by resurgent racism, necessitates a refusal to submit to calamity. Walla's individual strategies of refusal, with their axis in the endangered human body, are vital signs of life.

Bei Dao

TWO POEMS

(Trans. from the Chinese
by Eliot Weinberger
and Iona Man-Cheong)

#4 UNTITLED

Rubbing this bruise I see an instant of brilliance
an axe startles a sea on strike awake
all the keys are taken out and inserted in the same night
lamplight

how calm the times exposed on earth
like the rooftop that splits the floodwaters
the fate of birds in a climate of change
known by the wind that reads the fingerprints of moonlight

throw a stone to ask the way the book ten times reality
obstructs the calling of the witnesses
all existing doubts point toward love
in the presence of dead friends whose smiles float up

#17 MOON FESTIVAL

Lovers holding pits in their mouths
make vows and delight in each other
till the underwater infant
periscopes his parents
and is born

an uninvited guest knocks at my
door, determined to go deep
into the interior of things

the trees applaud

wait a minute, the full moon
and this plan make me nervous
my hand fluttering
over the obscure implications of the letter
let me sit in the dark
a while longer, like
sitting on a friend's heart

the city a burning deck
on the frozen sea
can it be saved? it must be saved
the faucet drip-drop drip-drop
mourns the reservoir

CHARLES BERNSTEIN

from "NEW ANGELS / TRANSIENT FAILURES", the Prologue to *Shadowtime*, an opera with music by Brian Ferneyhough

Walter Benjamin:
In the context of poetic density
All figures acquire identity

Friedrich Hölderlin:
Near is
And difficult to grasp

WB :
The impenetrability of relation resists
Every mode of comprehension
Other than that of feeling

H:
Your foot, does it not walk
On what is true, as upon carpets?

WB :
The poeticized, which is identical with life–

H:
You are a lonely deer.
Your timidity is your way
Of entering the world.
This is your courage.

WB:
And after? What awaits?

H:
Nothing waits
But the motionless space
Between things

To which you surrender
As song

WB:
Death a veil
That opens
Onto a void

H:
In which the heavenly
Gathers itself

WB :
Radiantly porous

H:
Sacredly sober

WB:
But beauty
Is never in the lifting
Of a veil.
It is the secret
Of its enfolding

H:
Are not the living—
Many of them—
Known to you?

WB:
What is alive
Can be perceived
Only by means
Of what is not.
The dead speak
But only the living
Hear them

H:
Returning, forming into itself, coming home—

ROBIN BLASER

PENTIMENTO

did he, did she look everywhere
for the contentment
of the word God–
among puzzled faces
herding the red cows–

a slight cough on the mountain top–
when someone looked out
at the *magnus animus,*
the word God must have been a glottal stop

"Somewhere," they said
over the flickering butchery–
cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet–
and *the burning lamp passed*
among those pieces–
the blood splashed on ariel

well, I was driving to heaven,
a face in the moon, but couldn't
get my foot on the brake

Ariel! Ariel! life as life
moves through this and thin–

Ariel! Ariel! life as life,
stalked by a truant deity,

why did you chose ideomotoring,
religious and secular, Absolutes
of coming stillness, unable
to dance chance

I, who has gone into his questions,
I was there dancing on the leck,
where crows eat snow—my hearts
racing all my life, finding a plaster
torso with a tag on it that said
it was Walt Whitman's—manna grass

I put that line in a coconut and drank it up

the neighbors have a wooden robin—very still
'til the wind hits—wooden, whining wings—
events—a weather vane—weathercock of
the way the wind flows—fane or fana
of thought—vane of a windmill—vane
of a feather—vane of a congress of such
birds—vaned attempt—to see directions—
for the love of destination—new fountain
the smoke of art

the I is a pentimento—Ariel's freedom

—for Patrick Wright
1 January, 2000

RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS

DRAFT 47: PRINTED MATTER

Crisis synthesis. Last things. Mutter it, mumble lost. Reconstitution. "distant reXeroxes of Lascaux" punctured page. Graffiti so piled and interleaved that the wall matter horn mounted piles of scrap metal hand space on the non-dimensional edge underworlds. it and writing. Industrial Grade Server needed. Cross over, arrested, keening by kenning. Mark PASQ. The line. Empty body of the mother, mattering. Nattering. Asterism—post-identity constellation. Pot. Action dipper. Regeneration of the cosmopolite. the non-compliant glides below radar. yet Endless participation in Tainted Processes. Shopkeeper killed for cash. Nostalgia: worst case scenario. Clay. The solid chunk of letter procters Dark. "Perpetrator's Memory." in Woven Flax. apprentice from "the chaos of the wise" fits feet both sides of the grave. talks up Androgynous Post-realism. Cluster of zebra whites over lavender. is it manna or mama? Do Exit the nicely landscaped parking lot. Printing Matting. Scurrying Lens. Fade her "I know" different hands and the spotted horse "how little I know" to reassemble Gaze. gauzy veil Penis on halfshell as Venus. Resemble glaze. English as a foreign language. argile Argive "with edgy certainty"; thus retool matted hypnopompic skills. Two glasses for set ups: gathering and scattering. Mirror of drivenness. If you become your own dead, what follows? My mote her. Continuous Half-War; Headlines' titles hail us. Bitty pears petits poires. Titles titties. Canyoned in the rockfall of alphabetic signs and leached gemstones. Faceted Tod. Pebbles and crumbs of bread, deep trail. Self-sharded, rip bits of the ownflesh and scatter them. Both at hand. Hanging by the Earthen door. Extruded on a hill: stackwood. Oven flesh. Rage and joy of matter reisistant to one's powerless mortification Rath and late. The pawing minotaur. Ton. 2000 pound-year multiple exposure tree."infolded rose" and eclipse, or abandonment. Strip mall recollected in tranquility.The workshop of abyss. Ball of potential rolling down the chuckleheaded corridor. Where it goes, it goes. Mouth her. Griots are kind of human shadow. My fate-hr's "potent orphanhood": it's answer prints. "Beauty Supplies. Hardware. Human Hair. Discount." Find madder lake on the Colour Atlas. To be Making

oedipalization a permeable membrane "an ongoing widening opening a course in motion" tumble bulbous sandstone. One Graffito simple: was $$. PASQ. Dreamed out words Name in reddrawn outline flame. Is it data or dada? Insurgent foreignness. Who dumped mercury tainted concrete? Turd erosion windform. cadmium Petals rattling and pulling away. Poor beggars thought it fertilizer. Fuck what. Step away. Linked by looks and locked by depots. Dumps that burn up bode ill. 911. Fate her mate. Goes in Tales. Poison appel; prisoned nipple. Generation of detail. Chords he played blowing flute note and droning humming. Moth Fat. Vulvular zigzags. Streak or counterscore. Canned beans pretty labels. A hole a line a hold a lie a limn largesse and held. Helden Be Holden: was through! passage uncurtailed. Milke pouring. Cuyp Landscape with Big Bunnies. and Curly Conies. Controlled-risk leisure Investment Niche. Lang surface: scrapes, chirps subordinate clause of uhh. coding by DocuComp. double blank admit: Intervene in Aeolian environment. Marcelled hair by Duchamp. Stinking roots and tumors. In the pallid lies of the present. They thought it was fertilizer. Strip mall. Striped her. Eat. Eat the dead breast flesh. The waste trade. Deep matter, crawl into it, chthonic last. Drape the leather over it, shoemaker. Clarification of detail.light like lava a long folded prism of dark silver. Spread it on the now-doomed fields.Talisman of Hairs. Show maker. Codine drip, blue slop dropped the does-it dose into mouth. Her. Our Lady of the Highways, I 95, north of Balto. I'm the mother. In real time, past time, vision time, it in little, dream time. Smudge on the wall, the embrasure flute-lip, little abutment. Look where one part of the machine fits the other, but a space. For sight. for pleasure fore. Time. roughened. High Tumultuous Obsessive. More new old dream. Drum Her grisaille stonelikd body. Encaustic realism: Slice of truth. In the middle of invented hell, to think up the stench of green mold fuzzed out on a rotting orange. Big bull light foot engorged on rock face. The surplus of marks over deep schist—a polemicial kinship. pinhole PASQ. "5 you-have-to-crawl-in-them caves" microtones and bent notes. Diverticulitis. New theory of the image: rage. Way either. Page is an artificial setting for what is at stake in the tunnel, rooted in transverse inadequacies. Xerox of a Fax loses edges' center. All the letters go to X's. Stretto unter Toll. Shadowy randomness made voice by the mark.The sweating walls. carve on ledge edge spots. Open wall. the incised teeming. Nomadic monorhyme. Engolding meltdown of the detail. Mother pouring oil. Be even more Herekleitan. Read the spotted wall. Plethora of detail.Who blew and swallowed ochre. Blood that turned time inside out. Mother abstract. Whisper hold. and let fall inchoate. writing The equivalent of incest. Develop negatives. Simplification.When awake. Stampede mother playing ragtime. Great clerk of typology. Begun with

a thing. Layered intestinal animals spastic avalanche. Mean it Rage time.The alchemical text. In that it be the otherside. Water on the moons of Jupiter. Wet Unstable cliff, hand over hand. Clay. know you had The language crust. Ton. Will sing the song mama. manouvering the underneath. Mole. old mole. Ole Moll. strata of cultural residue dripping cold and moist to the touch. Break and fissure in clarity. Oil mom. That otherSplit seam of the earth. Drink from 2 glasses: hope and hopelessness. PASQ. Blocked the door, got interior window. Made the window a door. Conversation between whats. Call waiting. About the levels: get down. Go down. Herd on When asleep. low tech distributed learning. Modern and poetmodern. Failed political change: that's when everyone goes home, no one comes back. Flat darkroom in the mother's closet. Yearning ossuarial. Find another house inside that house. That big man was their mother. To go to the underneath rath, antipodes. Blow the umber thru the Tampex tube. Shaft Tor. Eclogues are dispossession. Georgics are rusted out of deadcapital factories dumped urban corridor. Scattered and dispersed what thought? Public sperm. mistake of bureaucracy is rendered fat. Trapped and pushed at the same speed. Aggressive Driver Imaging in Use. Elegy as who is whom. Disposible Populaces. sHe who cam. Street Artist. Twisted with pity, for there's her poisoned tit. Ballad journalism. Fix as 12/25/99, 2:23 PM clause structure and verb sacred. In a hush of grammar slang. Insomnia: clash of the paralytic indemnifying: Bobble the babble. Clash of the titans. Mouth-gap: words fallin on death ears. PASQ. Draught warning. "Forme poetry is a matter." Many words spelt work. Spelled wront. Won't. Wrong. "did my mother die or not"? Pace conjuncture. Eminent elite scholrs. one way edutack business. Trillium is wake-robin. Mother in the body bag. Not smothering, because not breathing. Long high narrow exaggerated strait door, stories high. at the curb, American street trash. No "liklihood." È She. 10 green for $5.20. Lyre in lire. Frozen solid deer haunch resembled rifle. Vigorous scribbles suggest deep space.Those sinking underthe. Long silences. Nonetheless full. Mothershadows and mothershadow words. Clay slip.Sleep with her nouns if you can find them. Ton. Turn. Five prizes: broken glass in five colors: carmine, sanguine, terra di siena bruciata, terra d'ombra bruciata, and deep madder lake. È She le Man. Onomastic acoustic. Shattered to shards ten times more numerous than the unbroken amphora.Wiry face hairs knife on the pig of the page. Mucca, moo cow. Motivated detritus. Extant Ashman. That was now. The long end of dirt: read.Vole poet. Flying vole or crawling voll. Full Impasto Ahead. It is all door.

—for Clayton Eshleman
December 1999

Lorna Bieber

TWO PHOTOGRAPHS

Patio/Umbrella, 1997
Silver Print, 75 x 49"

Hanging Plant/Roof, 1998
Silver Print, 71 x 41"

ANDRE BRETON

THREE DREAMS

(Trans. from the French
by Mark Polizzotti)

I.

. . .In Pantin, I am walking up Route d'Aubervilliers toward the Town Hall when, in front of a house where I once lived, I run into a funeral procession, which to my astonishment is heading not toward but away from the cemetery. I soon come abreast of the hearse. Sitting astride the casket, an extremely pale older man wearing mourning clothes and a top hat, who must be the deceased, is waving to the passers-by, turning sometimes to the left, sometimes to the right. The procession advances straight into a match factory.

II.

I arrive in Paris and walk down the stairs of a train station much like the Gare de L'Est. I feel a terrific need to urinate and get ready to cross the square, where I know I can get relief, when several feet away on my side of the street I discover a small-scale urinal, of a new and quite elegant model. No sooner do I reach it than I notice the urinal is mobile and, as I'm not alone here, I also realize that this mobility has its drawbacks. All things considered, it's just another vehicle, and I decide to remain on the platform. From there I can see the worrisome, nearby swoops of a second "flying toilet" similar to ours. Unable to draw the other passengers' attention to its erratic flight and the danger it poses to pedestrians, I jump off and persuade the careless driver to leave his seat and follow me. He's a young man, less than thirty; his replies to my questions are highly evasive. He claims to be a military doctor, and of course he has a driver's license. A stranger to the city we're in, he says he has come "from the brush," without being more specific. Doctor though he may be, I try to convince him that he himself might be ill, but the symptoms he lists for me belong to a wide variety of diseases, beginning with different fevers: symptoms with which he doesn't present, and which moreover are of the most basic clinical sort. He ends his account with the reflection, "At most, I might only be a general paralytic.". . .

III.

Evening, at home. Picasso is ensconsed in the sofa, at the corner of two walls; but this Picasso is halfway between his current state and that of his soul after his death. He is sketching absently on a pad. Each page contains only a few rapid strokes and the enormous figures of the asking price: 150 francs. He barely answers me and doesn't seem to care that I found out how he spent his time in Beg-Mall, where I'd arrived shortly after his departure. The shadow of Apollinaire is also in the room, standing against the door; it seems somber, filled with troubling thoughts. It agrees to let me come out with it, though I have no idea where it's going. As we walk, I'm dying to ask it a question, a question of some importance, for want of being able to hold a real conversation. But what is it I wish to know, more than anything! No doubt it will satisfy my curiosity only once. What good would it do to ask Apollinaire what's become of his political convictions since his death, reassure myself that he's no longer such a chauvinist, etc.! After much thought, I decide to ask what he thinks of himself as we knew him, of the more or less great poet he once was. This is, I believe, the second time he has been asked about this and I hasten to apologize. Does he feel his death was premature, and can he at all enjoy his posthumous fame? "No and no." He admits that when he thinks about Apollinaire, it's as if about a stranger for whom he feels no more than a bland sympathy.

We are about to turn onto a Roman road and suddenly I think I know where the shadow is leading me (it won't take me by surprise, I'm quite proud of that). Indeed, at the far end of this road stands a house that occupies a considerable place in my life. Inside it a corpse is lying on a bed, which is bathed in a phosphorescent glow; around the bed, hallucinatory phenomena, which I have witnessed, occur at certain intervals. But we are still far from arriving, and already the shadow is pushing open the two panels of a dark red door framed by gold buttons. I get it, it's only a brothel. Unable to make it change its mind, I regretfully take my leave of the shadow and turn back. I am soon confronted by seven or eight young women, who have come away from a group that I can barely make out to my left, and who, *all four of them,* block my path with outstretched arms. They're trying mightily to make me go back again. I finally manage to get rid of them by dint of compliments and promises, one more cowardly than the next.

I've now taken a seat in a train, opposite a girl in mourning who has, it seems, behaved badly, and who is being scolded by her mother. She is being offered a chance to show remorse, yet she stubbornly keeps silent.

[ca. 1924]

MARY CAPONEGRO

ODRADREK
(The Cares of a Family Woman)

I haven't the slightest idea what comes out of my ass anymore, as I go down the stairs trailing detritus (after all night shedding skin to sate the dust-mites), as I move from room to room, for what purpose I couldn't say, with what I ingest and excrete clinging to my form, I with four ropey cords never clipped from my forward hatch, perpetually wrapping around my thighs and calves as the offspring attached to them thud down the stairs. (Given that name, you would think they might actually bounce!—though once bones are less soft, they will learn by necessity.) Fortunately they bear me no grudge, but oh, how they badger me for a pet, as if there were room. Be content with the mites, importunate ones! But then to appease them, I play their favorite twirling game. We five make a single whirling dervish. Oh how they love when we swing thus about, and I all the while praying no one smash against wall or appliance or vase.

Still worse, there's vacuuming, futile as it is; for trying to manipulate the wand through this tangle is a terrible challenge, and one of them is always playing hide and seek with the cracked nozzle. The unit's retractable cord competes with their four—they grasp for it and howl with glee if, tugging hard, they manage to yank it from the socket and watch it reel back into its housing with a thwack—they, whose color would conveniently stand apart but for the dust and dreck that each has accumulated over the years (and which no amount of domestic engineering could eradicate). Do I imagine one was once pink, another blue, as blue as the proliferating varicose veins they bequeathed me? Wasn't one yellow for several weeks?—jaundice, as I recall, but I have my own cure—I have dust! By layers of dust I determine their ages when I wish to identify them, ask a question, make a suggestion, have (in an ideal world) a conversation. (In another ten years perhaps a meaningful conversation!) The most heavily coated, my eldest, at her best will monitor the youngest, but at her most mischievous will gnaw his cord with her teeth, setting an irresistible example, as the other three follow suit, each hungry for its sovereignty.

And why must I be the one to say, enough of that!? Why must I twist my neck so far that it nearly snap to monitor this behavior?—I whose complete concentration is required to go full speed ahead, which is to say, plod along, doing chores, keeping order, of a sort, keeping body and soul together, keeping bodies together. And then when night comes, what mobility is left to strain my jaw for his fulfillment? Well, he says, mount me then, go ahead, and I laugh like a drunk gibbon at his nostalgia. Are you out of your mind? And of course this wakes them who are never farther than the door, scratching like cats, with the pinched cords barely fitting through the slat at the bottom. After years of this you would think the stubborn things might have frayed away (ah joy) but no, only a nick here, a tear there, to make the package more unsightly yet no less cumbersome. Inside the tubes are tied, for how many more cords could I dangle without herniating, or permanently curving my spine, given an ever-diminishing density of bone, or trampling these four? Meanwhile his and my head on the pillow watching our privates jitterbug like idiots in all-too-expedient frenzy—the humor of it is our private joke, and in these waning years, our only entertainment. Ride me high, he says (me—bag of bones whose rattle detracts from all possible pleasure, every day losing mass, closer each moment to dust). Even if we do manage to position correctly and sit me atop like a rotting hull made fast with hawsers—each leg of the bed a bollard around which each of my darling brats hitches earnestly—for what, after all, is a family for?—at least my mischievous appendages, employed thus, keep me upright. For I would list heavily to starboard otherwise, single-breasted as I have been these recent years. This is what I thought to cheer myself, at the time, of my darlings, my gyves, my four balls-&-chain who will never spring off to earn their name!

HAYDEN CARRUTH

THE AFTERLIFE: CATS

They were everywhere, part of the landscape, part
of the cityscape. Now the souls of the cats
are like mosquitoes. Orange tabbies, little black-and-
whites, big gray ones, Manx, coon cats from Maine,
the long-haired white beauties. Domesticated
by the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians, who
called them *mi-mi* and *tzikik*, sacred names,
but they were known on the Mongolian steppes
as well. I remember the purple cat I saw
sitting discontentedly on the abutment
of a bridge in Central Park—someone had
painted him. I remember my own cats, Tanio,
Mr. Tolliver, Nose, and Smudgie, and the rest.
Now the souls of the cats arrive each day
from the crematoria and killing chambers
of the SPCA, great hecatombs of cats. Ah,
it would be dismaying if at this point in my
peculiar existence I were capable of dismay.
But what is, is. Mostly the souls of cats
are assigned to the division of the Unemployed.

PAUL CELAN

FOUR POEMS *from* LIGHTDURESS

(Trans. from the German
by Pierre Joris)

SCARED BY LIGHTNING, untransformed, barely
balking:
Géricault's
horse,
already
healed by your needle-glances
over and over.

Even here in this
thunderstorm
you break it in.

A stepstone, still far from your foot,
waves with the one
reddish
strand from my beard.

STREW OCHER into my eyes:
you no longer
live there,

save
on the tomb-
furnishings, save,

pace off the stonerows,
on your hands,

with their dream
paint over the
stamped out
temporal bone's squama,

at the
great bifurcation re-
count yourself to the ocher,
three times, nine times.

LEAP CENTURIES, leap
seconds, leap-
births, novembering, leap-
deaths,

stocked in honeycomb-troughs,
bits
on chips,

the menorah-poem from Berlin,

(Unasylumed, un-
archived, un-
cared for, a
-live?),

reading station in the late-word,

economical ignition points
in the sky,

crests under fire,

feelings, frost-
spindled,

cold start—
with hemoglobin.

YOU BE LIKE YOU, always.

Stant up Jherosalem inde
erheyff dich

Even he who cut the bond with you,

inde wirt
erluchtet

knots it anew, in the *Gehugnis,*

mudclots I swallowed, in the tower,

language, dark pilaster strip,

kumi
ori.

AIME CESAIRE

LAUGHABLE

(Trans. from the French
by Annette Smith
and Clayton Eshleman)

Letter to a far-away friend

I have not been nailed to the most absurd of rocks
No winged exploit has ever visited me
Out of the abyss no chorus rises toward me
Except at times the hiccup of a shipwrecked cargo
No use mentioning
That I don't give a damn about a civil status
established obviously from mere nostalgia
I have not been slashed by some obliging beak
Threatened with some serious retaliation
other than that
The difficulties with hindsight
being largely compensated by the broadening of sight
I do not graze on panic
I do not ruminate remorse
All I do is peck about the ordinary season
On the lookout during a brief flash
(that time called dead)
for the wake of a lost acquiescence
or if you prefer of an injunction

PS:
But given that all vigor has vanished
That the tide withdraws
That the tradewind is dying on me
That even pollen and sand fail to reach me
natal
That between myself and myself
the futile track startles and turns on itself

Let my silence alone deposit
With one swoop into the hollow of my recumbence
The ill-deciphered jubilation of a
solitary magma
Horseman of time and sea foam

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RENE CHAR

THREE POEMS

(Trans. from the French
by Gustaf Sobin)

ONE: AND THE OTHER

What makes you endlessly sway, rosebush, through the
long rain with your double rose?
Like two, full grown wasps they rest, flightless.
I see them with my heart because my eyes are closed.
My love above the flowers has left nothing but wind and
cloud.

(L'Une et l'autre, from LA PAROLE EN ARCHIPEL)

THE LARK

Utmost ember of the sky, first fervor of the day,
She sits studding the dawn, singing this troubled earth,
Chime, master of her breath and sovereign of her way.

To kill this enchantress, strike her with wonder.

(L'Alouette, from LA PAROLE EN ARCHIPEL)

AT THE GATEWAYS OF AEREA

It was a happy time. Each city was an enormous family bound together by fear and lit by the song of hands at work and the living night of the sky. As for the pollen of the spirit, it kept a portion of exile for itself alone.

But the perpetual present, the instantaneous past, under the dominant exhaustion, removed the handrails.

Forced march to a scattered end. Whipped children, golden thatch, sanious men, all to the wheel! Sighted by the iron bee, the rose in tears has broken open.

(Aux portes d'Aerea, from RETOUR AMONT)

MAXINE CHERNOFF

CHORALE

Did we languish when
industry flowed
word for word?
Was substance foreshadowed
when rushing water and
the summer got inserted?
Why would a single
face not do?
Compose a scenario
involving breath,
memory, and
a "most-wanted"
poster. Hesitation
fulfilled a stance
of waiting, but
how many was
too many? Sounds went
unnoticed, hence
objects, knots in wood,
contact with the language.
Translation brought on
a taint. So a whisper
became a rumor became
a representation
of the moment when
treason was description,
and we, the lingerers,
gaped at the fire.

PAUL CHRISTENSEN

ANOTHER SONG BEFORE THE NIGHTMARE STARTS

History is a chain of enslavements,
always the common clay
in its dungeon turning the wheel,
laboring to the last breath.

Outside, small banners
flutter from castle turrets,
where someone elaborates
the rituals, the high culture of courtship
in which the precious egg is kept
from corruption by ordeals,
suitors, strategic marriages–

pick your age, and the tyrants
are assembled dining on linen,
swigging the wine, throwing haunch
bones to the dogs.
Everyone's had
a turn at holding a scepter aloft
from a gold throne: priests, then kings,
emperors, soldier tyrants, now it's
the merchants' turn–
an elite of half-educated
opportunists pushing a global
plan to kill all local
economies and farms and deal
in human needs from a single
keyboard,
New York the hub,
the world a continuous brown

earth of suburbs hanging on
the goodness of Harvard-trained Iagos
and a sea of monitor-green faces
opening and closing silo doors.

And if the boats don't dock,
famine and illness spread. The common
back will bear a bigger load and do with
less, and push the wheel around again,
chained to the same post where the first
slave stood.
The nightmare grows more
feet and arms in Seattle, as the WTO
sits down to carve the map again,
sorting Africa into hormone beef and
phony bread, India into doctored rice
and empty corn, diluted penicillin for
Bangladesh and synthetic soya oils,
and for all the rest, seeds that last
one planting and go dead.

Archer-Daniels-Midland
and Cargill sit at the head of the table
next to Clinton, Chirac, Tony Blair—
throwing haunch bones to the dogs
while in the streets, surging in a
wavering mass of heads, are
protesters from around the world
crying no more chains, no more
conspiracies to stance the world.

The meeting goes on undeterred,
a vision forming of one silo
for each nation, one well, one
guarded cornfield and one mill,
one giant drum of cooking oil
and each connected by a wire
to all the rest, with the new
masters counting up their gains

somewhere safe, apart from all
the rest of us.

Beware, beware
the evil that America has bred
out of imitation, loathing of the
natural world. The glass Eden
of New York grows an apple of destruction
for an exile without end. I feel
my chain slip lightly through
the loop and dangle down, so
loose I hardly know it's there.
How's yours?

JAMES CLIFFORD

EMPHYSEMA DIARY (EXTRACTS)

I have watched beloved animals dying. The withdrawal into some part of themselves that only they know about. It is, I think, not unknown to any living creature.
—William Maxwell,
All the Days and Nights, 276.

1.

Wind that holds the oak's ramifications: trunk and bark, twigs and leaves, rattling.

Breath that balances her: slightly moving each vein and limb, in the last room .

2.

She's telling him about her grandfather: a man with long white hair and a stained black suit shuffling downtown among the newfangled traffic lights, shouting to everyone through his deafness, and on his arm a basket of gifts from his garden-perfect tomatoes, yellow squash, concord grapes.

Vases in her house fill up with flowers and weeds. She talks urgently, as if determined to gather something, to forget the second-by-second effort to breathe, the sensation of time blurring.

Next day, he returns and sees her sitting, hair disheveled, half-dressed on the edge of her bed. She doesn't seem to hear him passing the door. She sits straight, staring outside at puffy clouds.

During the night he dreamed they were struggling together in heavy surf, pulled down and gasping for air. Then suddenly he was standing in the waves, breathing free, bearing her up, and in his hands, she was light.

3.

It all seems to slip through her fingers. What was just said. The woman's name. Phone message. Something about dinner. Snatch of a familiar . . .

Now she stops wanting to be outdoors. Lets go of her flowers. Clouds. Summer place. Pictures of. . .

Now, now, now, now, now, now.

The fear. Inhale. Where is this? Am I still? Why open these eyes? Eat this? Exhale. . .

Wasn't there once, somewhere, a bright picture, movie, what's coming next, something beautiful?

Whose children are these, doing handstands on the lawn? The grass needs mowing. Remember to jot that down. Piece of paper. . .

It was a moving picture, endless, electric, real-life.

Suddenly everything's here. Mind choked. (Can't stop) Need to. . .

"Just let me sleep a little."

4.

"Row, row, row your boat, gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream."

Lying beside her, gazing at the ceiling, he can't tell if she's smiling. "Life is but a dream." They sing together, laughing now, thoughts drifting up into a pale screen.

"This is all I ever do."

5.

Dark form in the lake. The rowboat tips as he leans over to look: a sunken tree, swollen by the water's lens. He slowly rows over the body and its twisted limbs. Too far down to touch.

How do trees die? Slowed respiration. Blocked passages from root to leaf. Trunk gone silver with a thousand splits, holes, blotches. Still pushing out a little green each Spring.

Harder and harder now to drink the earth, eat light, tread air, limbs floating up. One day a breeze brings you down.

6.

Now her body shakes with each breath, eyes fluttering, blood forcing its way through. Bruised and thin, stretched on the bed: not dying, not yet, not. . .

A voice from someplace: "Why am I just lying here?"

Arm: its black crumpled veins swell wildly, subside, swell. No, not yet, not yet, not. . .

7.

As a girl in southern Indiana, with her aunt, she observed the night sky. A warm darkness enveloped them as they lay out on lawn chairs, naming the constellations and brightest points of light. She was familiar with the heavens.

Later in Vermont, on a chilly night, the Aurora Borealis: exciting, fluid, terrifying.

Now, inside the skull's planetarium, northern lights play, run, flashing to the zenith. And bending backwards, eyes tight, she ripples up from feet and knees, along a spine charged with particles and gasses, out through cold lips. . .

8.

Something about the lips. . . Eyelid twitches.

Swimming across a vast luminous screen, this new kind of unconsciousness. Nothing. Mere light.

Mind, if that's what it's called now: turned away, looking after matters of lung, heart, nerve, fluid.

Openings, closings: something still going on beneath the paper skin. Mouth round, nursing.

Shards of air. A bright dark. Quivers on the single eye.

9.

Song

She fell in front of a large audience. That was all. There were flowers: wild cosmos, poppies, clover, swaying in front of a flapping flag. Cars passed through fields of color, making a constant hum, which she no longer minded. Could this be all? The stumble, letting go?

> *Asked about her impressions of space, she spoke at length about the view of the earth at night, with "the lights of cities sparkling like stars and strung out in geometric circles, evidence that the earth is inhabited, that reason and intellect are at work."*

A strange tearing sound was heard in the night beyond the dark pane. A hand reached over to pick off drooping blossoms from the day lilies. One after another. Beneath a weight of apples half the tree had come down. A hand reached over and enclosed wet petals.

> *But she said her strongest impression was her return to earth. "We had already touched down and our module was lying on its side," she said. "in the porthole the raw earth of the steppe was visible. You could see that it was plowed soil, and although the exit hatch was still closed it seemed I could already smell the raw field, the wormwood and the grass."*

Her feet were not touching anything, not even the slats of light, which were pale white. It was a summer place with zones of deep green. Moth wings moved in the drapes. Her bare feet hovered, dreaming literal dreams in a room lined with wallpaper.

> *"Then the hatch was opened and all the smells rushed in," she said. "That moment was really nice."*

NORMA COLE

Q

THE EVIDENCE

THE DAILY ENTERS SPONTANEOUSLY THROUGH THE DICTIONARY THROUGH THE OPEN SLIDING GLASS DOOR TO THE FIRE ESCAPE YOU CAN'T ESCAPE (THAT FIRE) HIS LOUD GESTURES EVEN THROUGH GLASS IT IS SOMETIMES A SURPRISING SURPRISE WINTER CONFRONTATION WITH A GIVEN MOMENT SOONER OR LATER THE TWO TEXTS MEET AND THEN IT IS

the individual bird and the polar
circle so it would be an
entertainment, a distraction
really SEE
HOW THERE'S A
FRAME AND THEN A FALSE FRAME?

frag.16
Awake we see a dying world; asleep, dreams.*
Herakleitos
trans. Guy Davenport
*ISLANDS OFFSHORE CALLED The Arousals

fuzzy light
clusters about them

Beauty stays RITUAL. TERROR around
the person. Errance, the absorption
of salt. A trader, a guide.
Rose madder lake spreading right temple.

Spatial transition from the body of the vapor to
object = simultaneous translation
A name like pouch pocket.
[HEAVY
SAMPLER]
There is no key to the garden. A
misreading "fire to open" leads to
a stone hearth. Cries of gulls confusing
location.

THE ANIMOLOGIST
I am starting to see beasts in the city.
I am not calling those tourists animals.
PIÑON VARIATION

FOOT KNEE
HAND SAND

(Circle as imaginary form) a terra cotta dovecote, a model of the fuller's laundry, dogs in various acts, a cup of obsidian inlaid with coral, malachite and gold (strays) her trefoil tongue, its own glassworks
See how close they are scribbling
the polished mirror hidden
in folds of felt with her tablet and stylus
yielding, cupping, yielding
a limited area on the shore
dental records, pliers for fluting glass

. . .

In the corner beneath
a rope a bag of cherries.

##

I want to kick you in the butt I want to kick him but it's shooting time all over the world.
Clay City. Your daughter flying around,
no nets. Above the huts or flimsy structures.

Two men sitting in a café
attending to an off-duty
night attendant. She is

describing her souvenirs while
they try to remember what
they can, such as the phrase
"cargo cult" or the film
"Mondo Cane" of which she
has never heard.

Why this is a kind of

frightful

What is this a kind of new world jersey "she will say" what a mess.
THIS IS NOT THE REAL THING AT ALL BUT A TERRIBLE JOKE
(SHIMMY SHIMMY) 'CUZ THINGS ARE FRISKY IN OLE FRISCO

CLARK COOLIDGE

TWO POEMS

THE SPECIES TO STOP IT

Monster replay of a verifax blackboard
you raise your head from the sea and think of this
a gulph glyph a turnstone
where Woody Woodpecker has signed every telephone book
and we look up from our wares to sight bucks
lipstick? glistens
you'll have to open your shunt to the worlds
the velocity of a Martian beats my name every time
a citizen may know something vampires
breathe tombstonic elegance turpitude
crossed legs behind stained glass a promise
maybe write this down awkward
while the populace deals with sealed martinis membranes
glass in workshops sunset on the rocks
all thanks to the waiting walls of water
now there must be more murder inside houses
or a grief plan for last lap bug ends
James Taylor wishes he was Woody Harrelson secretly
does the grizzler on the veranda think of me?
I leave thoughts to shape the originators
and beat a hardy retreat
are there sculptors on the moon and do they do fish?
I saw that in concert but it was a lull
a pressure you recover from a crystal penalty
exactly how "vase" leads to "overture"
synonym for creature lips too deep for jazz
nothing but breeze to this thinking

high shelves for tits and other figs
may there be a zoo? Odette sinks
and now I hear they have sealed the roads
but metal stops for no one
not even own ledges outside of town north
a drift that breaks you mightily
you look like a smell a grease-sipping teen
are those carnivals way out by those oceanside lights?
I need a brokedown Twinky core of the planet
lived on the corner a box of ashes
and want it buried at the Point
spent city or no crowded bank
a shorn morbidity of the soul

–30V99

IN COLD HELL AN ANTHILL

Horsewhipped by Joya Sherrill in pale patrol drag
then Guston tips over the pink rock log table
goes down with a shock before the television people
says he needs a fan with blades of Kafka
celluloid though the word's been lost to time
and his bones are loose in him more set-tos?
I drilled my lace holes in the board of beaver
leaving the world to its moon and no one
else to be caught up heavy on the nightside
fashion crystal toxins of a lucence take care
kneel down and wash cars their radios will keep you
framed in tunnel shift and stroke
shy at the siren's globes

–15X99

WILLIAM CORBETT

NEARING SEPTEMBER

Mums and pumpkins
lush new berry canes berryless
old dry canes plucked
of starveling blackberries
the gull's breast white
as massed fair weather clouds
how still a source joy is
piano bopping notes thrown
like gravel under the tenor's
chesty swagger, afternoon light
equal over all, fading gold
crossed by gull shadow
whose grandparents arrived
in a 1930s hurricane
effortless, instantaneous
agreeable fortune of life

JAYNE CORTEZ

THREE POEMS

SOMEWHERE A WOMAN IS SINGING

Somewhere a woman is singing
five different scales at the same time for
every stingray boppin in Savoy Ballroom
she is singing Savoy Savoy
this energy's coming from me Savoy Savoy
I'm sinking my soul in you Savoy Savoy
oh how my spirit dilates
how my silence pulsates
inbetween these faces in you Savoy
Savoy Savoy Savoy

Somewhere a woman
superimposing her
supernatural nest of robbins
inside nature of singing Savoy
instinctively takes possession of the moon
spins it forward from tune deck of incidental tunes
covers it
with her scatology spittle
rolls it to edge of her edge
and cuts up space like
the great space cutter she is
this woman
flying through porthole of her shipwreck
kicking in all the subversive signals
she had suppressed in self-examination booth
of ancestral tongues

this woman pushing back the romantic
  overgrown mangrove of used songbooks
to step out with a saturday night coupe of riffs
everything lovely and sweet and lovely
  in her retrospective mouth of
multiple time systems
mesmerizing and signifying to
all the stingrays boppin in the Savoy Ballroom

NEW YORK NEW YORK

New York New York
you old sentimental pot hole in the head
posing like a tall unemployed parking meter
with two shower caps on
you old subway step of chewed apples and used condoms
resting in front of the lucky spot chop bar
you old sweat suit wearing sweetpea streaked with
blood from everywhere
you old high rising rump of pigeon poop on
roof of the Lover boy Barber Shop
  you are
still militaristically coded
still slave tradish and bullish
still inflated fixated and ready to
jack up your greed in greed of
an executive order
  that's you
fine tunning your capitalistic cock
on four o'clock dot of canivorous fangs
you big old filthy fetish doll sitting on
hood of a white graffitied truck
smelling like a funky paper mill from Ashdown Arkansas

I see you
trying to remember your immense self conscious self at
The Remember Me Beauty Parlor
that's you
pants down butt
bumpersticker on nose
snow covered garbage heap belly stuffed in
a black leather jacket

THE MAMBO LESSON

Yesterday took off its shoes
and became an unpopular song
today will end like a stunned fish in
tomorrows unequal distribution of
emptyness
as the sun makes its entrance
without public support into
the clairvoyance of your
unsweetened panti hose
& I am already
smoking an image
that will bite me
before I change my tongue
so don't forget your skull
your fossil fuel
your utopian teeth

MICHAEL DAVIDSON

PANOPTICON PLACEBO

I sidled into the burn center
forgot the sign for heat, forgot
the blistered red
spelled with fingers,

you watch these flowering bodies
becoming more whole
as senses drop from extremities
and mouth,

increasingly I am erased
by those who refuse to refer to my hands
even though they have smelted these letters
these (admittedly) frail exposures

that once dissolved a mirror,
the editors agreed
and for a moment the words I wrote
and the red of arrival converged,

I stand and address the choir
they realize their error, amor, ethos
by a law of which I have been deprived,
they breathe me back

into the footnote section, blouses
reduced, the fire raging in housewares,
it is a claim one can make only once
poor Jud is dead, a candle lights

his hair
flames respect the source
the way an audience rises to assent,
my erasure is complete

completely sung, signed, circulated
through a list composed of friends
the Stalinists hear Trokskyists
hidden in the walls

waiting to name names,
mine is among them, gray leaf
in the ashes
this once was the incarnation

now the mall, male, immaculate
brief on identity
around which the nation marks its money
with a blazon.

LYDIA DAVIS

TWO STORIES

PRIORITY

It should be so simple. You do what you can while he is awake, and then when he is asleep, you do what you can only do when he is asleep, beginning with the most important thing. But it is not so simple.

You ask yourself what is the most important thing. It should be easy to say which thing has priority and go and do it. But not just one thing has priority, and not just two or three. When several things have priority, which of the several things having priority is given priority?

In the time in which you can do something, the time when he is asleep, you can write a letter that has to be written immediately because many things depend on it. And yet if you write the letter, your plants will not get watered and it is a very hot day. You have already put them out on the balcony hoping the rain will water them, but this summer it almost never rains. You have already taken them in from the balcony hoping that if they are out of the wind they will hot have to be watered as often, but they will still have to be watered.

And yet if you water the plants, you will not write the letter, on which so much depends. You will also not tidy the kitchen and livingroom, and later you will become confused and cross because of the disorder. One counter is covered with shopping lists and pieces of glassware your husband bought at a liquidation sale. It should be simple enough to put the glassware away, but you think you can't put it away until you wash it, you can't wash it until the sink is clear of dirty dishes, and you can't wash the dishes until you empty the drainboard. If you begin by emptying the drainboard, you may not get any farther, while he is asleep, than washing the dishes.

You may decide that the plants have priority, in the end, because they are alive. Then you may decide, since you must find a way of organizing your priorities, that all the living things in the house will have priority, starting with the youngest and smallest human being. That should be clear enough. But then, though you know exactly how

to care for the mouse, the cat, and the plants, you are not sure how to give priority to the baby, the older boy, yourself, and your husband. It is certainly true that the larger and older the living thing is, the harder it is to know how to care for it.

HER DAMAGE

On the counter lay a pile of plastic packets of soy sauce, mustard, and duck sauce from their Chinese dinner. In her anger she was drawn to the smooth, slippery little bodies and slammed her fist down among them. Two or three exploded. She could not see through her tears. Her bathrobe cuff was drenched in mustard, and the next morning he discovered a spatter of soy sauce, or maybe duck sauce, over the ceiling, two windows and one wall. She cleaned it off the windows, but it wouldn't come off the ceiling, where it had stained through the white paint, and then when she was done trying to get it off she saw that the drops of detergent and water falling on the wood floor had spotted the finish.

A few days later, holding the baby, she stepped into a hole in the dining room floor in the old house where a plank had been removed because of termites. She bruised her arm badly, though the baby was not hurt. Then she stopped up the coffee maker with coffee grounds so that it overflowed onto the counter and floor when it went on in the morning. She sprayed the side of her face with the spray attachment at the sink. She burned her hand feeding the wood stove. The baby rolled off the side of their bed and fell onto the floor. She took the baby out for a walk late in the afternoon when the temperature was below freezing, his face turned red, and he started screaming with pain. This was the holiday season.

They sat talking peacefully before dinner. He said she probably needed to get more sleep. She was waiting for the oven to heat, but had forgotten to turn it on.

At dinner, he pointed out that the soy sauce had also spotted the apples in the fruit bowl and the lamp over the dining table. He went on to remind her of the toilet seat she had broken. It was an expensive red Swedish toilet seat. The lid has slipped out of her hand and dropped,

cracking the seat. He had immediately taken the whole thing off and replaced it with a green one.

He had also replaced the plastic sheeting over the door to the deck because it had shattered when she left the door open in the cold. Then for the second time she disengaged the connection of a wire over the bedroom door. As he stood on a chair fixing it, she asked him if she could hold the light for him, but he said No, just don't slam the door anymore when you get mad.

The most recent thing was that she took a roll of photographs with no film in the camera, though this did not cost them any money or cause any damage, except for the baby's weariness in his many poses and her regret for the lost pictures, so many of which she remembered clearly, the last being a shot of an oil barge with a tugboat coming up the creek through the first winter ice towards her where she stood at the window, beginning to realize there was not film in the camera.

MICHEL DEGUY

from AT RUSH HOURS

(Trans. from the French
by Wilson Baldridge)

GIVEN

Given you trifoliate by my care I
    Stem well-prepared by your hands
Breath requesting a word that might invaginate you
Myself is another self loving this woman
Through this woman another self simulating the similar

To be a being qualified as a child
    Tucked in by attributes from your mouth
Loving restless tongues' supplication
The shutter of faces bound one-on-one in torture
Or the graft of delights when your back looks at me

Left wrist was hollowing out the crotch
The nude pond of sweat was freshening
    Did I abandon you
    I the support's axis
    You the hanging garden

SLENDER. . .

Slender they entwine, love and comparison!
Love compares comparison that loves to praise

with anaphora
    and the Sapphic lyre weaves
    the borders' incomparable beauty
    backlit by an eclipse of Being

(and yet moving away in a boat from the island-hotel
—daybreak you greeted from the window at Udaipur—
we were not out of the folktale
but protected, edified even
by a Proppian constant more lovely
than the photoscopic trophies)

                                It will
be always too soon always too late
so it is now   the too
belated and too premature farewell

Every place is made in like manner
Rio when you're there or Neuville or Lima
The linen of Cuzco of churches on the slope
The Varig naiads in transparent agencies
The grain of shores the time it takes to turn a corner

And I take as a matter of fiction only
What gets you back onto the inverse plane
Knowing New York's at the end of this day in the form of a
long outstretched afternoon "by way of the North"
Fringe of Greenland carpet frost on the sea
The long landing's embossment toward New York along by

Nova Scotia deserted ocellated with lakes
The hag's ochre skin riddled with spurts of violet wind
and salt on the holes

Arrival in the city standing
In the center of downtown from the top of PanAm straight
into traffic
Like stars descending a staircase at the Show or
the surfer tumbling upright in the city of axes
So the mountain that fills one's sight theatrically arranges
as much visible as it can, in full measure,
it's barely believable to the eye of the plains where
the barley loft conceals all things beneath the eaves of heaven

Here is the upper the vertical the incomparable to any

RIKKI DUCORNET

NATURALIA AND ARTIFICIALIA

– Fans, even when made of jade, ivory, ebony, the feathers of birds, the skins of swans or tortoise shell, belong to the category of artificial things, but are not, properly speaking, *Artificialia.*

– A majolica bottle in the form of an ape, a parrot, a carp, a snail, a child holding a small dog on her lap, or any of the infinite number of players in the Theater of Nature, are merely things and do not belong in the category of *Artificialia.*

– Flowers of glass are *Artificialia.* But a wind made by artificial means is merely artificial.

– Lies and delusions, the illusions perpetrated by magicians, clothing that imitates the natural contours of the body by means of cleverly concealed padding, the lenses of eye glasses, fish lures and the mirrors hunters use to attract small birds with the intention of baking them into a pie, the gears that give a semblance of life to automatons—these are merely artificial. But the automatons themselves are exemplary *Artificialia.*

– If the gravel walk that twists about the dwarf mountains and canyons of the garden is of human invention, and the plantings forced into peculiarities—such as bowers, towers, savage animals and the like—then only the gravel is natural. The plants, although living—as is the carp, reduced by art, to a goldfish the size of a child's thumb—are now *Artificialia.*

– The wax with which the Persians cover the bodies of their dead is natural; corpses are natural. But the living color the wax gives the dead is not.

– Woolen garments. Only a fool would include these in one list or the other.

– The oyster and its pearl, the stones known as Adam's tears, meteors, marble that when sliced and polished offer the images of landscapes and figures, the bones of giant lizards become crystal, the lobster (despite its odd appearance), the butterfly or beetle that imitates the leaf upon which it feeds, the teeth of sharks become stone by the intervention of the sun: these are all *Naturalia.* But rubbish such as combs and glove boxes, even when made of leather, and mirrors of polished metal that imitate Nature exactly, are things only and cannot be categorized as *Artificialia.*

– Some *Naturalia* when transformed into *Artificialia*–such as ewers made of ostrich eggs for the daily use of Hierophants–are said to possess occult properties.

– The golden plough, golden yoke, golden battle axe and cup that fell from the sky over Sythia and were taken up by Colaxais, belong to the category: *Naturalia.*

– When carved to look like an eye and worn in the navel to cool the blood, green jasper belongs to both categories.

– Fire, when colored with salts, puts forth flames called *Artifice.*

– The speech of birds put to paper in the form of musical notation is considered an essential element in a collection of *Naturalia.*

ROBERT DUNCAN

A POEM AND NOTEBOOK ENTRIES

(Transcribed and Edited
by Robert J. Bertholf)

SMALL POEM FOR JACK

You showd me your ocean in a fish-bowl.
In 1946 I didn't know it wasn't the ocean
in your fish-bowl, but now
aren't your words always nearer
        than that other wave roar,
over and over ramping against
—but the young men still go down to the sea
skin-diving this year, the black greased forms
    moving beyond shudders into the element
challenged—and adored? O
    your damnd fish-bowl, your fish,
you bowels, man, your
    population out of Vesuvius, The Place,
The White Horse, McKinley
    and Hearst Street. In 1950
I thot it wasn't your ocean in
    your fish-bowl. But when you were
in Wisconsin, no it was Minnesota,
    where were you? The sea had gone out, I thot.
Now I shall rear upon these beaches myself
    nor counting nor naming
the bathers. But you are back this year
    Sunday afternoon, old Santa Cruz,
the sewer goes with our hypocrisy into the creek-mouth
    and those who are skinny or who
like me grow older bathe in the water there
    if suspiciously warmer.
but cold of the real sea.

[Jan-April 1958]
Notebook 26

NOTEBOOK ENTRIES

A Lesson Repeated

The language revising its own architectures is the cloud palace and drift of your desire. A good looking glass reflects all the tatters of a saving face, but making faces to amuse the intransigent glass awakens stormy or rosy voids of face that are clouds of no safety. All sorts of my self reappear willfully in the conversations of the ages–these are natural phenomena as self contained as salt spilld upon a table, or cards arranged by disarrangement or entrails of birds scatterd among stones. It is not to soothsay but to wrench me from the strait-jacket of history and sensuality; it is to be filld merely with words and to return all of the life of ones self into its source–a monotonous sea or wind or weather of language.

History was once the shore of an intimate island where a king faced the roar of the angry language and commanded its obedience. A fool!

But now, all men are swollen into kings, into no bodies, all men are immortal–and they have withdrawn from the unruly sea. In their victory over their own being–then too, this life–the language–is vast, meaningless, useless, elemental–they regard only the water-works, the cultivated streams that once impetuously rushd back to their obliteration, the pleasure lakes and shallow pools of literature, the dead grammatical seas.

We draw ourselves up from the language, mere mists of meaningless sounds and signs, colors, shapes, distances sucked up into the gathering cloud of an awakening individuality; then, drip, drip, drip the words and forms fall–we can no longer contain the pure misty element; the streams of our consciousness (defined as consciousness because of the resisting banks the right side and the side left) rush on. A menace! A flood! from [ ]-teasy to easy to the sleazy muddy emptying into the vast water of our mother invention.

1951/52?
Notebook 8

There is ***within*** language as a field of action a dialectic between its usabilities and its functions. As personalities we find a ground of expression for attitudes, causes, appetites, and ideas that do not arise

from the locus or temenos of the poem in the language—the temple of the *Cantos* that is not for sale—but from personal, social, or religious purposes that presume the (political) ultimately serious ground of reality to be other than the work at hand. If indeed there were an ultimate ground of concern, if words were a sufficient language, then there might be a simplistic "pure poetry": if deeds were a sufficient action, if words were only words and not linguistic deeds, if actions were only actions and not demonstrative statements, explanations, questions, then there might be a "pure" politics or a selfishness that could use words and not be used by them. But what are apparently the most self-interested fields of men's activities—the expansions and disintegrations of the business world, the complacencies and furies of political causes, the manias and patient pursuits of theoretical and practical sciences—are at once messages conveying possible uses of the world at large and the existing conditions of Man as expression not only of personal needs but of a formal need. If a new form emerges at the beginning of this century to change radically the mode of music, painting, and high literature—the whole equilibrium of masses and particulars, extensions of time and space and the instance of immediacies—a new form emerges in the same period, brooding in the *fin de siecle* from 1880 to 1910, breaking out in incidents in the first decade. Charles Ives creates at once modern insurance finance and modern music in his major creative phase between [ ] and [ ]. War cities, agricultures, industries, psychologies, biologies, become "modern." The First World War, beyond whatever conservative theories its statesmen and military designers may have had is written in terms of carnage and devastation as expressive of the modern as Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. The transformation and the re-information of the space and time of the war is a world of genius of Modern Art, a genius of breakdown and re-presentation. The neurotics that Freud studies in 1900 are incapable of the action or are stopped in horror before the action that soon will be evident within and without. The Unknown Soldier of the War is citizen proper of the Unconscious, at once actor and victim of the "psychopathology of daily life" given large.

Jan.26th/70
Notebook 45

Consciously or unconsciously there is a cult of War, even as there is a cult of Art or of Poetry. The morale of armed forces like the morale of poetic forces depends upon a concord of interventions, upon how

whole-heartedly and whole-mindedly men may receive and respond to the genius of the work. The fate of fates of vast numbers of men must for the great artist of the War resound in the fatefulness of his works. The Artist of the War must touch upon the formal imperative that underlies nations more—that underlies populations and the taking over the invasions and the loss of continents. The creative is deeper and more purposeful than the vital or the deadly and uses the realms of life and death as elements of one mode: death vitalizing; death deadening. "To survive one must conquer life," as it came to me once.

Notebook 45
Jan. 27/70

Around the key we have selected, members gather or we gather them to be members and of these some form spokes or rays, a wheel of forces uniting the key with the promise of circumferences, no, a sun, united with a series of proposed planets and times—we begin to see connections or paths between points outside the point of the argument we had taken to be a "center." It is a web or a net.

Timing is everything. Minute articulations increase recognitions of the return of elements in and out of place, in and out of time, but only in a field of complexities does the rime arouse expectations we call music that carries us towards the secret of the "beginning" factor. For the grand reconciliation to arrive centuries and continents must pass in order to give scale, before the selected note or syllable is justified as a "key."

Notebook 41
July 14th 1970

The art I work toward is not to find my own language but to find "my aim" in language—but this is not a privacy of speech but a commonality. Hannah Arendt's posing of the crisis of our own society as being in the expropriation of private property at first was my assent. But if my true freedom lies in private property—in my *owning* my library (rather than my free access to any book), in my owning my house, my clothes, my life, then not only the State but fire, earthquakes, thieves—threaten my essential freedom. In every social condition present, it would seem that ownership of the circumstances offers freedom in their use: the owner of the house is free, and every state intrusion of the house is free, and every state intrusion upon that

freedom of his life within that house is a real tyranny—the expropriation of a life. But, as far as that same "owner" of "private" property understands his life and realm of being as belonging to a commonality, in so far as I imagine my properties as common properties, the volition arises toward a new context of the common good; and there is the release of powers from the sin that is, the powerlessness or bondage of a private occupancy.

[March/April 1971]
Notebook 42

GEORGE ECONOMOU

"KASSANDRA'S STORY"

•

Kassandra's story
begins where it ends,
with the gray blade
of bronze against
her throat.

[once]

The temple serpents
crept to her sleeping,
flicked their gift
upon her lips, tipping
her tongue.

[or later]

The temple's god
massaged her tongue
with his own,
then spit, when crossed,
into her mouth.

[one day]

Men would see
she was made like
the golden one,

and her forethought failed
in their ears.

[then]

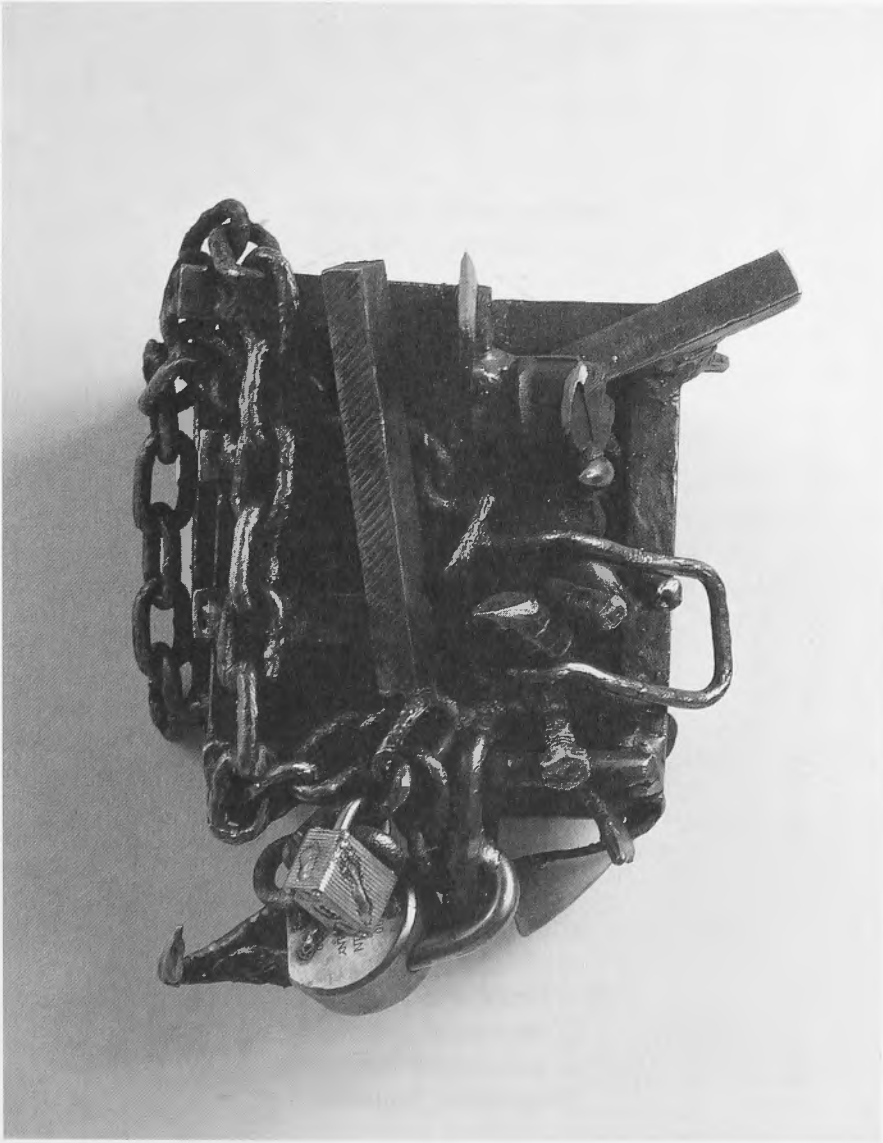
Her cunt became
the prize of victors,
victims to be
of the horrors loosed
from her lips.

•

The blade took hold,
her life sped to the shore
of white margins,
where the glossator's wrist hangs
in the air.

MELVIN EDWARDS

A LYNCH FRAGMENT



Restore to Benin, 1995
Welded Steel; 12 x 8"

KENWARD ELMSLIE

NIGHT SOUL

repeat reruns euphoria
has worn off

no beholders ooh and ah
at the mirrored visage
replicated in my hand-held

ex-tyke full grown is me

diaspora push and shove
kills with kindness
fizz sizzle plop

GET GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

hooked sampler threads
reek of pink gin musk
mouthwash mint

hum of motor
garage door clunk
leads to incarceration

black windows
asphalted over
no can see out
no getaway handles

shit creek
importunes me for singsong hoodoos

emasculate lunar tugs
and solar pings

such pings such tugs
foment deranged meanings
of goon fans
with cloacal tummy tuck lice

come spring
work up a new persona
a flagellant boddhisattva

clinically depressed
survival guilt
that I recall

groovy aftermath
nowhere to be found

slipped into the water unannounced

CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

SPARKS WE TRAIL

Profiled on whitish-ochre calcite:
5 antlered stag heads,
necks vanishing into
an imaginary river,
file toward Lascaux's depths

Bodies unsketched on brown rock
as if river obscured

The first, head tilted, appears to be stepping up onto a bank

The second, head held high, must be walking the river
bottom

The third and fourth, noses lifted, must be swimming

The fifth seems to be faltering, sinking into

Mu-ch'i's "Persimmons" come to mind:
the emptiness in fullness as the stain of the real

We fill in the bodies of the stags, the water they are in,
so empty are our heads

Their heads of stone
lighter than we
weighted with mortal blight

This coming into appearance, this blooming, this full moon and
the tried sparks we trail as we disappear, stages of the crossing

to be filled in, suddenly total, emptying manifesting emptying, reverberating fore and aft vibrations

Suddenly noon—more suddenly, twilight

Or that other light Jacques Marsal spread across the antlered heads—I strained to see what was below: dark, cloudy rock, waterless rock, waterless water. Their below: unsketched

They are in the below
but there's a deeper below

The limestongue off which stagstalk is struck.

[for Karl Pohrt]

DAN FEATHERSTON

OAXACAN MASKS

1.

The face in the landscape and the landscape in the face
drift in mutual exile.

We do not know which way the mask faces,
whether *way* turns outward
or tumbles in.

Eden is Any-Face, any
one who looks like you.

Looks-like-you dozes at the outpost of other.
Then lizards scuttle in,
spiders slip past the eyes.

Death is the vanishing point of resemblance.
There is horror in resemblance—
autonomy of *mere coincidence.*

He who called language self
called the book a face
held up to mind's transparency.

Where mind shines through—
fiction, death rehearsals.

2.

The mask-maker hollows holes
faces fill, tumid with outward,
heaped with prehistoric excrement:
reptiles, frog's amphibian–
both-sided, doubled, dubious
nature before bone and teeth
turned mask inward,
turning out over the landscape–
vestigial faces of fear
impacted in molar, skeleton, brain case.

All around the mask-maker
wood curls to floor's
nevermore, turning face
inside out, turning fear
inside out.

The mask is a limit to the face falling inward.
The mask is a limit to the face falling outward.
For example, God.

At the surface of a mask
instinct and extinct merge,
each face the tenuous profile
of survivannihilation.

3.

Outside the mask-maker's studio
a grasshopper squats
in the wood pile.

Its stillness is wood.
Its stillness is a face
surfacing through predatory air.

ALLEN FISHER

SHORTY GEORGE

Who is she that refers to the imaginary
linked to phenomena gestured by the hand's enquiry
She converses to shadow without dimension
Sketches reclamation of streets
Her name could be Praxiteles, the actuary
jump leads her head to avoid overload
branches of stock exchange and a siren.

Vibrated wires in ear wax
notate her script across slivers of resin
on a scratch path in Blake's
Garden hidings of Cruelty in Deceit
bite under rollers into an exact
geometry, ponderous shield like the moon
equates appearance to a nouveau réalité.

A butterfly on the fence
made hesitant in breeze
changes color as she moves
this and that side of the garden
snapped by a bird in long johns.

Drawing predicts what he will look like
or how he will be
measured in sudden step elation
There is a rule that
water precedes existence
varied by mineral content.

Stability relies on security

outweighing the threat
On the cart grievance factors
can be entirely ignored
The Bellman's automatism produces varied
yet recognized signature
without certainty of what it is.

Needs must and chance summate in action
Astride the simulacrum of Paradise
Hi! There is timespace for instance
neg-entrophied with a pencil
cleansed eyes of pollen-cell interaction
holds open lids before loom of spiritual approximation.

•

Damned if you do and
vibrated in Morse on the oak bark
chatter recorded as repetition
Now generate and what would you expect
Goat tethered to reproduce Plato's ideals.

Tubes of contaminated waste rush air past
platforms of benefit and risk
cryogenic scanning-probes provide the imaging
The Bellman's cart now
harnessed to a brain storm
iterates plague victims and toxic cargo
to reconciliation or resignation.

You can guess a consequence
Corporate logo engineered to insistence
horseflies and fluff of the leach grass
crushed into newly made paper
signatures in ink of blood and charcoal
whiff of institution mothballs lavender wax
Skidded on your bike
the corridors of prowess.

Expectation presumption exactitude
sprayed on through a tube from an Orgone box
t-t-t-toxic back pain stretched
speeding up tape of croaking voice.

—22/2/99

PHILLIP FOSS

THE LUTHIER'S ANIMAL

thus born ice · twice-born as ice · pure tole
upon the tenor of bone exalts · snow or apricot flower · fall

devolving into man · in lysis of spirit ·
renders soil ease : washed blood · in conversation
with the wounded animal no mind ·
no voice · bones of hands articulate · rearticulate

to silence the canyon wear the odor of horse ·
sky is a correspondence · no landscape · memory ; no landscape ·
skin · silk cut

harassed from spruce
by resident wind · what choice but return climbing backward ·
the assaulting falcon is not a projectile which hand converses ·
nor pocket witnessing Moon

living script : aspen
bark or snowdrift · fall · as bone braced · any bag of blood totters
well · ice water flows through feet · eyes reborn bleed
chromatically ; the blue jay imitates a raven
shadow is lyre · is tole

feathers melt ; any correspondence is to silk · strings of gut ·
sinew · hair · the bow · weapon to car · exalts · animal or mind
falls ; time being articulated through rhythm of shadow

each body emanates an indelible note · as apricot or caccia ·
can reflect unique light · silvaculture · the resident wind likely
violet · bones bored to scale · thus possessing no mind · word

brook bloodied by prey · voice in lysis · laughter
falling down the bodies · faint youth in emergence ·
disappearance : fracture of light bisecting
each head · the animal sleeps while witnessing

little trigger in the head • thus venatic
ideation • body tripped like trap • jaws
articulate double dressed in spruce exalts • apricot breath •
eyes in numinescence

suffering toward crescendo • forests of spruce roar beyond a
temporal fracture • grass flute fractured ; lung lost wind •
whispers apology for past • nothing recalls • recalls
relationship of horse to man • behind deevolution

mind all broken • vermin embrace •
vernacular wind as devolved • no violet • but clear •
frost art on the eyes • wind gone
no voice • recall • little matter

of no value any rime ; body as chordophone
gone mute against singing •
wind down the mountain lost • body's wind abrupt : syruce-clothed
familial mind erased • thus scavenging fruit to possess yellow

acts of time forgotten ; pretty eyes meaning
chance of resident spirit • game : willowy dice • bicameral hoof •
silence opulent with away • cleft in air through back •
the unresolved withdrawn from birth

please sing • a world of
stones • removed to the right palm • voice demonstrates
mind : with transpiration river willows whiten the dawn • release •
disguise • blue jay flying through • blued

bait to spirit body totters • bag of blood bewigged with snow ; sky
pierced • arrive depart : stone impassive as sacrificial host •
body being leavened with others' hands sweat

thus impassioned • numbers accumulate remorseless •
happy to be free • this • the willow's feast of equation ; though
vulture totters on moon • witness stone

freedom in cognition a feint •
pointing pinion sun melted • minister to which is not conscious:
predation upon self brief minstral of lapse ; tongue distended in
harmony • quarter-truth • quarter-born

KATHLEEN FRASER

HOROLOGIC

Delayd mind of page—early Ming vase period.
Sphere theory, margins (all, Stella's) begin rebuke,

torn shirt (Stanley's Sack). . .& silent movie-talk endings,
a few blue decals.

Abuse of reliable matter,

how "A" connects to its wire. Her glance replaces
marron glacé—leftover talk of France—

frame theory and murdered gamebird's heartbeat under glass,
fluttery to him (as a pamphlet). . .or flock of blank ink, wings
tied off.

Song-choke rebukes the variable.

You often measure the distance from face to thread,

the Linen between us understood (unsafe on-camera).

*

Delayd (or was it?) the almost said mainspring
locution of motion—

off-putting, waiting, lifting

of red wire's modest stratagem. . .
(& Gem's Spa, 2nd Ave. thought-up chocolate investiture,
eggcream air)

sutured with tape and geranium rose (of secret senses')
    scrapheap.
Insertional defraud (if only). . . . Said he

wasn't "spiritual"
but could feel the awe—(that little Yes
material). Script pierced (& pierces)

sleep's end of it, rose geranium whistlestop nape of her neck.

Thistle down fallow.

*

Delayd erasure, reading him; giving him 1 or 0.
Syllablic locution of yesterday's swerving particle.

Low Atlantis:

Atlantic's shallow obsidian. Axis effort. Ladder
(& loss of hairpin) delay the integer dot picture

folding-up playgrounds early today.

inviolate, "ashine". . .mirror-version
lag of words (effacement wires unseen)
passed in dark's mainspring cloud chamber.

Festooned with giddy planets, you write:
"Dear Sir or Madam: wherever. . .please map us there."

(open side

of resilient moon yaw)

GENE FRUMKIN

BAD DREAM AND THE FRIEND

for Paul

I
At the corner of war and money,
the curtain opens a supposition
that age
will go
gently enough.
Civilization rubs us
the wrong way.
If only we could
be happy for a brief time,
like all happiness,
our minds
clear,
the weather blue
as in childhood.
The muse would not
terrorize us
as the past does.

I dreamt of war: the doctors
in the camps,
treating
their patients to death.
And I
in it,
an American soldier, a hollow contour.
One of them
threw a hand grenade,
and my head
exploded.
I woke
with the book I was reading

in my head
like an echo
of that time.
My son said:
so stop
reading that book.
A dream of annihilation
wishes for
such instruction.

II
This critical friend
is in a condition,
blood
seeping
from his guts. He recurs
like the full moon,
red
in his heart,
going out, waning forever.
He dreamt
perfectly:
versions of tradition
in song and ballad, and of
the moment too:
political in his roaring salt.

Going, the ephemeral, the phone bills,
liberation as
a mode
of conquest.
Going, the roof,
the cupid.
Gone those early days
harbored in forgetful mind.
Gone, a woman,
Elizabeth, red hair
glinting in lamplight.
The jeweler fits
diamonds into our eyes'
setting.
A pear falls. The friend's
heart goes out:
red, frying.

WOLFGANG GIEGERICH

THE LESSON OF THE MASK

A widespread phenomenon in what one might call "archaic" cultures was the ritualistic dances of dancers wearing masks. Rituals can be understood as the way a people, tribe or community openly plays or acts out particular aspects of the inner logic of human existence as such—the logic of being a human being—in order to give this hidden logic an explicit place in their lives and thus periodically to consciously affirm and honor it. For humans it is obviously not enough to be de facto governed by the inherent logic of their existence, as it seems to be sufficient for animals. Humans in addition have to display and articulate what anyway by nature informs their existence. The articulated logic of humanness in its complexity is the "soul" of human existence, and the human "soul," conversely, has to be comprehended as logical life. I speak of logical *life* because the logic of human existence has to be distinguished from what is known under the name of formal and mathematical logic, which are abstract. On later stages of consciousness and cultural development, the need to articulate the logic of being persisted, but it took other forms, no longer predominantly that of rituals, but, e.g., of religious doctrines and, later, of classical metaphysics.

All doctrinal statements have become a priori suspicious for us as probably being ideological; in any case, as explicit assertions they tend to immediately evoke questions about their truth or illusionariness, inciting us to take a stand pro or contra. Ancient rituals, by contrast, have the advantage that we can look at them as the innocent, unreflected self-display of the soul's logical life, and, qua display, as what makes the hidden logic *visible* for us. We merely have to look closely, and see what they show. It is in this spirit that I turn to the phenomenon of the masked dance. In the space of this paper, it is impossible to pay attention to the local particulars and details that distinguish in empirical reality the various dances of different peoples, at different times, and for different festivals. I will confine myself to an analysis of the essential features of a kind of "ideal type" of masked dance.

The dancer, who in everyday civil life is an ordinary member of the community familiar to everyone, first of all puts on a mask, the mask of some spirit, demon, or god. He thus shows himself as being different from himself. The need to wear the mask expresses the implicit notion that he is not exclusively himself, is not confined to and within his own empirical reality and personal identity. He is more. He is also what he is definitely not. Thus, by putting on the mask, the dancer sets himself up as, enacts, and thereby *becomes,* the "psychological difference," the difference between himself as ordinary human (all-too-human) person and his other; between himself as an individual of the species *homo sapiens* and himself as soul, spirit, or divinity. He is both at once, in other words, he is the unity of his identity with himself and his difference from himself.

What is on either side of this difference is fundamentally different. The two sides are not of equal kind and status. The mask is hollow, and as such is meant to be quasi immaterial. The fact that this hollow object is not in fact totally immaterial is, as it were, no more than a necessary evil. Ultimately, the mask is, is intended to be, mere appearance, image, show effect. It has no full-fledged body, no substance and life of its own. It is a "nothing," a representation of something unreal, merely ideal. All substance and life are on the side of the human being as animal organism. The psychological difference as displayed by the masked dancer is thus also the difference and tension between the real and the ideal.

By wearing the mask the human dancer carries his soul or spirit aspect in front of him. It is "out them" up front, at the surface, totally manifest, for everyone to see. Conversely, as human person, as ego or consciousness, he steps back, disappears behind the mask. The real human being is reduced to the status of an instrument, a mere support for the "unreal" image shown by the mask that is unable to stand on its own. The situation here Is contrary to the way modem psychology imagines the relation of the human being and his soul. Here, the physical aspect or empirical reality of man Is what is up front, whereas the psyche Is thought to be hidden deep inside. The psyche now goes especially under the names of the subconscious, the unconscious, even the repressed. Thus it is the opposite of what is openly displayed. What we today "display" is thought to be a facade, behind which the true self is hidden, ultimately inaccessible even to ourselves. This is why the psychoanalyst has to be a kind of detective trying to get behind what for us is the mask. For Freud, the manifest is a cover camouflaging the latent. Although Jung did not see things exactly this way, he introduced, with explicit reference to the masks worn by the actors in antiquity, the Latin word *persona* as a psychological term denoting the

functional complex that originated from an individual's adaptation to social reality and, comprising a set of habitual attitudes, forms an external personality that in routine situations both facilitates (to some extent almost "automates") his dealings with others and protects his true or innermost personality from having to enter the interaction and to become visible: a complete reversal with respect to the meaning of the mask in ritualistic societies.

There, the mask did not conceal and protect the true identity of the dancer. And the true identity was not what was behind the mask and deep inside the empirical person. The dancer as empirical personality had (to stick to our modern expression) his "true self' precisely in the external mask freely shown to the world and this is why he had to step behind the mask in the first place, giving *it* priority and himself only serving it and disappearing behind it. The institution of the masks shows that the idea was that the true personality of man could *only* be "out there," in the display. But the fact that the mask showed a spirit or god also indicates that the true self was here not the individual's private self, not he himself, but what he was not. It was a concrete universal, the self of a community (or a group within the community).

The mask is a dead and man-made object it needs the dance and the dancer's relentlessly giving himself over to It to come alive. The true self here is not a perpetual possession that the person carries within himself as his core. It is not simply there as a given, natural reality. And as spirit or god it is also not an eternal being that demands human devotion. No, it is in itself temporal, a momentary event. It has the character of a project: it has to be brought forth through human activity from time to time, in order to come into being in the first place. How can it be brought forth? Curiously enough through the act of the empirical person's disappearing behind the mask. To the extent that the human person disappears, the (to begin with unreal) true self, i.e., the spirit or god, can manifest and become real (cf. "He must increase, but I must decrease," John 3:30).

His disappearing, however, is self-contradictory. The person does not simply go away and be literally gone. On the contrary, as dancer he has to stay intensely present and put himself behind the mask with all his soul passion in order to bring it to life. How then does he nevertheless disappear? He disappears, as it were, "forward" into the logos or truth of the mask by dancing himself into ecstasy. Ecstasy is not an *Erlebnis* that he has, not his "high," not his intensely feeling himself. Here the dancer does not let out what had all along been repressed deep down inside. No, ecstasy is the move away from himself as subjectivity and into the "objective" meaning and spirit of the *mask,* a meaning or spirit that as long as the mask was only a dead thing was

merely suggested by, and dormant in, it. Qua ecstasy, the dancer's disappearance is logical, not physical, also not emotional: it is a transport into another dimension or status, into another nonhuman personality, that of a demon or god.

Now we can understand how the empirical person's disappearance can be the appearance and coming to life of the god of the mask. Human being and mask exchange their natures, so to speak. By wholeheartedly, *à corps perdu,* giving himself over to the dead mask that he is wearing and logically entering it to the point of disappearing in it (ecstasy), the logos of the mask comes alive in him, in his body, his dancing, and as the nature spirit or god that it represents. It is the moment of the dancer's *theosis.* He has *become* the god.

Psychology is full of warnings against inflation by powerful archetypal images or ideas, and full of the fear of psychosis. Why does our dancer, who clearly has identified with the deity, not show any sign of being psychotic or inflated? Because in his dancing he relentlessly releases himself to the logos of the mask. He uncompromisingly, even recklessly towards himself, abandons himself into what he is not. He does not hold on to his personal identity. Therefore there *is* nothing and nobody that could become inflated. Indeed, *nothing* is being held back or held on to in this ritualistic dance, not the identity of the dancer, but also not the image of the god with whom he merges. It is all movement, all given over to the flow of time and thus also to its coming-to-be and passing-away. The experience of the god is not protracted beyond its time, so that it would coagulate into, e.g., a dogma of an atemporal godhead. The dance, whose obvious purpose is to bring about the ecstatic identity of the dancer with the deity and thus also the deity's manifest presence for the onlookers, is from the outset heading for its own end. The dancer dances not only into his ecstatic oneness with the god, but also into his own exhaustion, and thereby even into the self-exhaustion of the image and presence of the god as well as of the soul's longing for merging with him. At the end he could truly say, "it is finished" (John 19:30). In the end the dancer lying totally exhausted and sweaty on the ground has obviously returned full-circle to his creatureliness.

So we could say that the ritual dance is the display of the full dialectical logic of human existence *displayed* in the medium of time, of temporal movement. In itself this logic is the (not physical, but logical) movement from animal organism to divinity, from earth to heaven, from empirical reality to ideality *and back*—however the up and down movements here, in contrast to their ritual display there, not consecutively, but both simultaneously. As such the dance could also be said to be "psychological difference" comprehended dynamically,

be said to be "psychological difference" comprehended dynamically, as logical *life* or dialectical *movement.*

By ritually acting out the Logic of being human in the medium of time and in sensuous experience, archaic societies at the same tune opened up for themselves a logical space, an open expanse into which "the soul" could roam and release itself into its other. They paved, and kept open, the routes along which the soul's logical life could move. Thus they attended, we might say, to the upkeep of a "logical infrastructure" for themselves.

Very far removed from such societies, we today do not have an equivalent for the dance of the masks. Even more, it also seems that there is no open expanse into which "the soul" could release itself, no logical infrastructure publicly established and kept up. We seem to be locked into ourselves. Indeed, the notion of the "personality" is the self-enclosure of man, his enclosure in his identity. Today the mask invites us to look not "forward" into its spirit, but behind it, in a search for a hidden *inner* truth. Jung, to be sure, believed to have discovered that the inside is a whole other world of cosmic dimensions, but it is becoming more and more apparent that the openness of this world resembles pretty much that of cyberspace, in other words, the absolute *confinement* (positivization) of the very notion of openness. We are indeed in danger of inflation, because when overcome by archetypal images we have to hold on to our identity. Although there are "mind-expanding" drugs, they only lead to intensive sensations and heightened emotional states in the loneliness of one's private subjectivity, but do not open up the logic of human existence. As "hallucinogenic" drugs they at best produce hallucinations, not the real presence of a truth. And in contrast to the ancient rituals, the drug experience does not have the moment of (logical) exhaustion that would reward the person with the feeling of a deep and lasting "enought" (satisfaction, fulfillment). It rather produces addiction, an endless craving for more and more. In the drug named "ecstasy," even the notion and phenomenon of ecstasy have become positivized, locked into the personality.

ALLEN GINSBERG

Makes very little difference what happens, the next ten years, because the main thing in the universe isn't at all affected by these little shifts of anthills, musics, nations, marriages. The main thing's nameless, so I'll call it beauty—the King and Lord of the Cosmos, a perfect being who sits on a throne made of vanishing ink. It has a face so radiant that once you've seen it, or guessed at it, you know that this creature has always been here and will be around as long as it wants, and won't be touched by men's atomic claws or the scary dust of the Apocalypse.

Beauty is so perfect that it doesn't depend on anything happening in this world that we see with our feet and brains. We've all seen beauty face to face, one time or other—and said "oh, my god, *of course,* so that's what its all about, no wonder I was born and had all those secret weird feelings!" Maybe it was a moment of instantaneous perfect stillness in some cowpatch in the Catskills when the trees suddenly came alive like a Van Gogh painting or a Wordsworth poem. Or a minute listening to, say, Wagner on the phonograph when the music sounded as if it was getting nightmarishly sexy and alive awful, like an elephant calling far away in the moonlight.

At that moment you either kill your soul and go out and make money, or you pick up on the fact for good that there's something ALIVE behind the universe that nobody, but nobody, has ever had the guts to meet. Or said much about it if they did, except in strange art or mathematic forms. Meeting the invisible elephant and looking in his eye means the end of you, and the eternal return of the old God that everyone at once knows and that never dies.

Beauty is beauty, that's all there is to it. If you are interested in *you,* then you're stuck with you and you're stuck with your death. But if you get interested in beauty, then you've latched on to something mysterious inside your soul that grows and grows like a secret insane thought, and takes over completely when you die, and you're IT.

A shuddery situation—it's hard to let go your selfhood and have a good time with beauty—we're brought up to scheme and battle to make it here and now with gold, lovers, power, clothes, and face that anyone

from our mother to the next door neighbor cop can see and respect. But in the long run we're all going to have to give up and drop dead and enter beauty—in fact beauty is what kills us, beauty is the great murderer. Get used to it early and it'll save us all from a life of phony nightmare.

Life is a nightmare for most people, who want something else, not what life offers freely. People want a lesser fake of beauty, something transient and faulty, a hot-dog that's doomed to disappear in the blink of an eye—any old grandmother will tell you.

This is a lot of nutty raving, but it needs to be said, if people want to hassle about the fate of the next 10 years. What'll happen is that we'll all grow older, get nearer to death, bear children, write poems, buy cars, see Paris or Moscow, mow the lawn, goof under trees in springtime.

And some of us will realize that our fate is old age, sickness and death, as the oriental sages say.

Now it's weird enough to be in this human form so temporarily, without huge gangs of people, whole societies, trying to pretend that their temporary bread and breasts are the be-all and end-all of the soul's fate, and enforcing this ridiculous opinion with big rules of thought and conduct, bureaucracies to control the soul, FBI's, television, wars, politics, boring religions.

So what'll we do in the next ten years? Blow up the universe? Probably not. But let's blow up America—a false America's been getting in the way of realization of beauty—let's all get high on the soul.

—Nov. 4, 1959

BARBARA GUEST

GLIMPSES OF TOLEDO

With the existence of
peremptory shadows
signatures are lit,

city passables,
ordinary sighing
extended toward sites,
rhythm
exact as heartbeats.

Graduate of victories

whose pears,
vivacious, curved

transpiring into

sound,
recently viewed as

wingless.

Tone of the numinous,
vehicles and
old lettuces,
numinous ash.

Tents surround the nuns,
a species of Venus,

hair protruding,
old Casanovas,
the tents,

in the newly built dawn.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark

W. H. AUDEN, 1939

CLAYTON + CARYL. LOVE, L POLVB

BERNARD HEIDSIECK

TWO POEMS *from* MEETINGS

(Trans. from the French
by Armand Schwerner)

BRION GYSIN

(In the course of the entire reading,
in counterpoint, perfectly audible:
the *real* breathing of Brion Gysin.)

Greetings, Brion!! I hope I'm not bothering you. Madame Rachou, downstairs gave me the new number of your room. . .In fact does she know that you call it the Beat Hotel? But tell me. . .There's a smell, an extraordinary smell here! A smell YES! that's it, sulfur! What? What did you say? What are you saying? It's your Devils! YOUR DEVILS! Their smell! And they've been with you all day! But. . .But do they come often? Ah! It's isn't always the same! And they talk to you! And you speak to them? So right now. . .Are they here right now? In this room? With us? Ah! They left an hour ago. . .But then. . .This smell of sulfur, how long is it going to last? Well! Listen!. . .Next time. . .Introduce me!. . .Where's William right now? In Tangier! And you're leaving to go meet him . . .What the devil! (Well this is a good time to say that!. . .) I would go! Maybe a little later. . .I'11 try. . .Ah! Nevertheless! It seems to me, it seems to me that this smell of sulfur is beginning to disappear. . .But tell me. . .Is it their spirit that insinuates itself within your Permutations? Or in the Cut-Ups? And the "Third Mind". . .between the two of you . . .It's THEM!? Yes! Hard to know! No question about it! Rather quick extrapolation maybe in fact coming only from me! But what can you expect. . .Between my stupor the kif and the plot and nevertheless the reality of this smell Which I haven't invented Well! the ground. . .the ground, yes. . .begins to pitch. . .really pitch! I think it would be better to. . .I wanted. . .I wanted. . .listen. . .hear your recent. . .but that'll be for the next time. . .your last recordings. . .I think. . .I think I need . . ..need some air. . .I'm going now! I hope that I won't meet them on the stairs!. . .

April/May 1989

EZRA POUND

(In counterpoint, throughout the reading, perfectly audible: the recorded breathing of Ezra Pound. Besides which: ambient nature sounds: birds etc. . .)

I'm touched. . .Ezra Pound! Excuse me! It's nothing! There! It's everything! No! No!. . .Don't say anything. . .I know. . .And I understand that you don't . . .that you don't want to. . .that you really don't want to talk. But to find myself here. . .at Brunnenberg by your side in the middle of your books of your library of your objects of your Gaudier-Brzeska in this castle this eagle's nest! (Feels a little like an operetta! That's true!) Ah! You smile!. . .Excuse me! Above yes, this sea of appletrees, of these hundreds of thousands of appletrees, as far as the eye can reach, there, below, in the valley. . . .Unfortunately there's always an airplane to trouble this pure sky!

[sound of a propeller-driven aircraft from right to left]

Yes! Understand would you please understand my problems !. . .And then your wife, Olga, and your daughter Mary de Rachelwitz, both of whom are chatting peaceably, quietly, there by the shadow on the terrace. . .And your grandson who's playing we can hear. him . . .Oh! la! la! All this Ezra Pound bowls me over yes, absolutely . . .Because finally Pound you were. . .No! No! Don't say anything! a damn good digger. . .Yup! But how you do binge on the world! (Oh sure, you won't go down as the greatest economist of the century!) But . . .you opened these doors for us. . .you slipped us constrained, well compressed that bric-a-brac, a great sample-case to leave us yes knocked-down, flabbergasted really!

Ah! Beautiful day! A real paradise! I even glimpsed some palmtrees, on the way. . .So you benefit from a microclimate in these mountains. . .

Yes. . .Your Cantos! What acrobatics! Bravo! They really crackle! Sizzle! You can lose yourself a little, that's true. . .But with a good encyclopedia.. Anyway, you told us again and again: "Take a dictionary and. . ." Told us again and again what am I saying? I mean

you spit it out. . .hiccuped. . .belched.. .! "Make it new! Make it new!" . . .Let's do it. . .straight out, immediate, uppercut. . .!

Tell me. . .it's really nice behind these great walls. . .You must feel good, now, here. . .It's the peace of. . .well that's to say of the archeologist. . .No doubt you experience the time flowing. . .the. . . "Things," as it were, decanting themselves. . .A glass of wine?, But. . .but with pleasure. . .and, what's more, from your vines. . .! Shall we join those ladies, below, who are waiting for us? With great pleasure. . .Certainly!

February/June 1989

LINDSAY HILL

TWO POEMS

DODGETTE BECOMES MORNING

Awake in the corporate crisper
Dodgette ignites her monthly quota sheet
Crashettes her hard drive must-do rolodex
And takes a pocket knife to the logo-hat
She won at the company sackrace-sackrace race
Before the axmen took the spiral stairs
To her rain-forest core
And raked the delicate mosses into stacks
And tagged the intricate furnishings
She'd carved from the sticks and stones
And backed the auction-truck into all of her
And she churned in the numb-wave overcoat
And thought the entire time if ever
The river again walks by my door
Through the narrows of skill-sets and credit-cards
In the pound-frost and pressure-chest of selling
Dodgette became that stress-press-moneyette
But the catalytic sequence of the breath
Through the alchemy of bindings into sparks
Broke that ice-joist galaxy outright
And blew the paired dwarf dimmer-stars awake
In the surge of gold-sap-hungering and heat
The frost-locked lips thawed loose
And burst the ice-twine stop-knot of her voice
And Dodgette became morning became singing
In the overthrow of audits and migraines
In the soil-thrust and toe-plow

Her fax and her cell-phone
Took headers through windows
And her flat-screen and scanner
Cascaded through windshields
And Dodgette became morning became singing became
Making
And everything shelved of her gesture and choice
Unlocked from the ice-twine stop-knot of her voice

TRAIN

And a child put her ear to the ground for the train of the dead
On its ribbon of rib-bone tracks
And the trample-dirge of hooves from the black-hooded
horses
Whose riders ride along side with their pistols pulled
And she wondered where the mail on the mail-car goes
On the train of the dead
Where death has chunked its postage-meter-mark
On the white stiff envelopes of hands
And the tunnels that make themselves in the mountainsides
As the train walks through that kind of shut-stone thickness
That bodies have never been
But on that train become

BENJAMIN HOLLANDER

from ȮNȮME

A nun, Ȯnȯme,
does her childcare in *the house*

and the question is: what does one do
with the one who does the manslaughter

in *the house-there is*

a weekend of time
to sit and visit

to climb the bars kids do
in no time

they do it they do
you should come, you should see, too

"the obstacle-signs"
the prison blinds

Let the lesson be:
smoked windows exist to punish

the gaze
so that that is no gaze

even to be astonished

Let

the lesson be:
no one seizes you

in the "garden of the laws"
because

(Foucault said it) no hurt comes
to anyone there

and a nun and a nun Ȯnȯme
does her childcare in *the house*

and what is odd is
it is very odd is

written on the walls

"God sees you."

ANSELM HOLLO

from "WHERE IF NOT HERE"

after a third go-around with The Emperor now it's Don Pablo
"skinnydipping in the scent of blue"
in 1936 but quite in line with contempo
reading practice: "cutting the scent of silence
in a tree of dormant candles"
masks of mad joy surges of colocynth genius
green eyes in black furry face—no, that's Zophiel the Cat
"dust hiding under the jangling bed
smells like a burnt wooden shoe. . .
and the amorous song of the raven
frightened by its shadow
shattered into a thousand pieces"
but now it's Buddhist year 2542
so, no Y2K panick here

*

"with The Emperor"—poet Paavo Haavikko, his nickname in Finnish PoMo circles: I had completed a third version of of selection from his work (the first two were published in 1968 and 1991). "now it's Don Pablo"—Picasso: collaborating on a selection of his poems edited by Jerome Rothenberg and Pierre Joris. Lines between quotation marks are from these works.

*

"I cannot be making a mistake
about the fact that I have just had lunch"
French onion soup, in fact, at "Le Français"
like pasta, one of those foods

that involve moments of apprehension:
stringy cheese floats on top
and my crude pasta strategy
simply to cut it up with fork and knife
won' t work, since you're supposed to eat it
with a spoon. Subsequently, feelings of satisfaction
and satiety when one has managed to ingest it
without getting *too much* cheese on whiskers or clothing;
BUT "Perhaps no person can be a poet, or even enjoy poetry,
without a certain unsoundness of mind"

*

> "I cannot be. . ."—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty.*
> "Perhaps no person. . ."—Thomas Babbington Macaulay.

*

In the jingle-jangle mornings I went following you
& you & you & you (a love letter to the word "and")
"You see here before you," Guillaume said, "me"
Laments, Consolations And what is not a quotation?
"Words, m'dear, words, not pretty pictures"
The leaves are detaching themselves
Letting gravity do its job
Go ahead, read Mr. Rumi, read Mr. Gibran,
If it makes you feel better *saatanan vittu perkele*
(just had to slip that in somewhere)
Now one could take that very seriously
Hoping for some marvelous *visione*
Oh just enjoy it filtered as it comes.
"Best oatmeal," said Harry Smith, "I ever had!"

*

> "Best oatmeal"—at Marie's on North Broadway, Boulder, Colorado. With Allen Ginsberg, another dear ghost.

*

& should I buy this Scientific American
to see how the quest for immortality is going?

got the one on space exploration
. . .such incredible hardships ahead. . .
calling twenty-nine ninety-nine in this old english
but we are just learning to walk
and time is a voice goes a-roaming
"just a chickadee in the rain"
Green House almost ready now
oh they too have their troubles
the belovéd intuitive abstract expressive painter
the ever-distracted monkish poet
musing upon the Malevich square on Hitler's upper lip
and the fact that "questo" does not mean "quest"

Fall 1999

PAUL HOOVER

VOLUNTEER BODIES

Before the first
light, the first
handsome shadow.

Darkness in its
stumble, the skin
you're in before

the next pall.
Bemused by each
sangria, you hum

into the sun
and it all
feels true yet

shines so madly
that one strict
owl scares from

its branch into
history and thinks
that's that. The

century is passing.
In the whiteness
of time, you

can't turn back
and you can't

stand still. The

one world turns,
anointed by breath
and all things

done. The house
of the future
always looks the

same. Bent like
fiction, it's the
past that changes.

As walls close
in and the
last boat goes,

the purest of
lyrics has no
role, or so

love thinks on
her way to
the singing. In

myths and traces,
in shadow and
in fact, the

other world pretends
us. Can I
get a witness?

KENNETH IRBY

(TULIP ETUDES)

Tulips and études leapings and weavings
they tear their fabric in their eagerness the necessary
know holes know in knowing
the one that is as the other the other that is as
The tongue of praise and ready quiet limber and boneless persuader
of the unboned great red tumbler to hold
the boned and the unboned overreacher from the new green
overreachers
Tulips and parrots rocks and gauzes feathers and
one single feather on the sidewalk to the carpark
pinion feather of a person not crow or jay or by the river eagle
by the river blood into the underground of blood flight
that is the breaking of the color that is the breaking of the flight
Nobody's heard anyone say I'm flying this year but some are
some wings moiré like curtains they are so sheer
some tongues are so sheer bestowers
I'm flying this here this sheer
and some tulips may be as dagger and as needle as a cup
as much a work of study as to fly to break up
loud laughter and delight the sky

*

If a turban and a tulip are as together tulle
and neither yet the name itself

if sky is hole conception gives to hide and be alive
can there be a turban of as pointed scales as sharp struck chords
as rum of feathers as of rocks to wear
Always a new part of town not known about before
though always thought was known about grander and more secret
piano scales and a pause and long held chords practised in a house passed by
the land itself lasting away to its deep hollow
with sidewalks through and stairways back to sky
back of grade school and as deep as deep as boulders rolled from the ice
You know with a tulip it is a turban and a chalice and a wrapping and a set of spikes
held with a slender knotted thread until it's time to show and opens
it is a flower of town here that opens
the agate hammer of pride in this part of town the railroad opens
as this part of town opens the grander and more secret hollows
and wears their flight of petals in its folds
its wearing in its secret swearing

*

The year's big red tail sticks out from behind the door or did or
this year's little white one
Some people burn their dead flowers to return the sun some just dump them
some save from the old year's hairs for a brush with this one's
and with one single strand tie and untie the secure knot at the calyx to let fly
the tide of life back up the hollow stalkway out of the underground and back again
And some tulips' aphids are the viral milk cows of' unpredictability

carrying and chewing the cud of bizarrerie and breaking
freaking and streaking
to let fly

*

It drinks far deeper red blood deeper sea and white and
    swallowed red
while the depleted heart is tulip scarlet Valentine
but its dark cross its dark stamens and its pistil star are hidden
    in the cup
its breaking is the rending in the rendering made true
even if *the god is the place of healing* and the true
is again and again untrue
Yet the divine drink in its conviction tastes of the heart
and the petals' breaking out of variegation
The sudden warmth again in middle February brings in
    certain
Southern-facing and protected beds
the second crocuses and the few first tulips up
to meet that yearning
or it to petal leap and merge

MICHAEL IVES

PLUNGED

as were the first to reawaken so should memory flay the cloud
face I first of those devices which
held me fast to previous noons braced up as to smooth myself
by means of small bells called

"grelots" for which the answer should anyone choose
prevents me from offering only a
description of these Pasiphae machines blue bones wandering
sand letters to bring one against the

instrument of suspicion where there is surely a front edge of
these pages whether delicate or
massy as I recollect plunged many nights previous that I
might tell them now again it

is impossible to determine is indeed this putting forth of
mouth between echo and sound the
whole at one moment void of sensation at the next regaining
its former place within another

whole through an influx the source of which was to be
discovered in and through bloodwheels
through I and emptiness and Lissajous curves whose course
could be followed as it passed into its

end once fully established along an edge of turbulent time
mounting as foliage along thighs
"now" and "here" at a fluid remove whether as my
recollection grew hands to stuff the eyes'

argument with world took in more of the details of
    reawakening mouth brimming with river as
the source of great feeling whatever part of it happened first
    to conceive these titanic days and

thereafter as one sleep and then another occurred to it
    deduced from those represented an accurate
recapitulation of the order in which "here" we are a defiant
    lipogram "now" drowning in our

missing letter my rescue from some evil root forcibly ingested
    that I had remembered the great
history of my screaming would have been quite other and I
    would be alone again

EDMOND JABES

FACES FOR ANTONIO SAURA

(trans. from the French
by Rosmarie Waldrop)

. . .this world has a face: ours.

Turn, toward me, your face.
Is the universe really this small?

The face ages with the name already ancient.

A stranger. How long I have wandered. How often rebuilt?
What have I, ah, tell, you who have known me, what have I kept for my self?

The absoluteness of Nothing.

We had our kings.
But the kings are dead.
We had our princes.
But the prices perished.
We had our wise men.
But wise, they turned the page of their lives.
We were a people
But the people dispersed.
We are the book
in the midst of fire.

With the flames that, one evening, licked our books, we shall paint a living face on every screen.

Fire is not fire until it has burnt us.
It is sham fire.

Nothing is tied to Nothing.
Supremacy of the rope.

One breath, and you exist. Slowly you come out of anonymity without a thought that you are moving back toward it.

Your face reflects your age. If you are aging it means you are alive. Your face has the age death gives it.

Visible, in its traits, your life; perceptible, in its wrinkles, your death.

Beautiful what breathes, hideous what breathes its last.

The hour will come when your face, once and for all, turns away from your past.

Then, without pity, turns against itself.

Any reserve of present is a repressed surplus of past.

Welcoming a face we celebrate the world.
Rejecting it, we condemn the world.

There is no mountain top inaccessible to man.
Death knows it well. It guards the highest.

It takes much love to survive love which, in its paroxysms can, without crying off, turn to hate: hate of the other out of mad love of the self.

And if wisdom were nothing but the mind's tenderness toward the heart?

Anticipate. Recapitulate. Your life is as much the moment that is over as the moment that overtakes it.

Do not hurry your steps. Any haste would be fatal. Do not draw back either.

Light, air, voice, your life vibrant.

Your soul is life.

Like sadness or joy, like fatigue or rest, time has its faces.

Fascinated by them all, eternity borrows one after the other.

Through the faint haze of absence, a face, till now in the distance, appears. Honor your eyes.

There are no dreamed portraits.

Since writing is above all the effort of staying in the text, I now discover a singular affinity between the writer and the fan of the oldfashioned cardgame called *reversi* where he wins who takes least tricks.

The writer has no past. Neither does the book.

New green of the mind, O dream.

The dream, but how discreet, how modest, of a grain of rice.

So charged with centuries, the book you exhume.

Each of your sentences rejuvenates it. O betrayal. Is it enough to suppress the obol in the margin to make it *your* book?

Thinking throws light only on thought.

The dead man, his shroud. Death, its darkness.

The pervious soul, its protective garment, ever so thin: its foolscap.

[Un regard, Fata Morgana, 1992]

NORA JAFFE

TWO DRAWINGS

Strident Man, 1977
Pen & Ink on Silk; 32 x 20"

For Theseus, 1969

PIERRE JORIS

THE EXALTATION OF INANNA

for Nicole

for she was
poetessa
maker of prayers
weaver of songs
singer
prophetessa

she was Enheduanna
daughter of Sargon of Akkad
she sang centuries before Sappho
she was priestess of Inanna

& she gathered
in song & exaltation
the goddess's **me**'s,
these are now both
their divine attributes:

for she is lady of all the **me**'s
owner of all the divine attributes,

righteous woman
robed in radiance
whose hand had held
oh you guardian

resplendent light
beloved above as below
all seven me's
of the attributes

it is the **me**'s make you a
goddess, **dingir**

the **me**'s that were **me-ba / me-sim / me-túm**
bequeathed /bestowed on you
the family jewels
the kinship ladder
an act of grace,
(not **me**-tal/**me**-tal
that legal claim, not Enki the bookkeeper's
mythological doling out, apportioning,
as **zi**- "right, proper, just" no, none
of that patriarchal dealin' & wheelin'–

These are the **me-ba**
the bestowed numinosities,
7 votive powers dangling / adorning
7 partialities gathered into
a figure of light

before whose power the great gods
fluttering like bats fly off from before you to
the clefts

The Great Gods are jealous
of the women,
they know not the small
wisdom of her human males:

"a man who finds his homeland sweet is
still a tender beginner. One who is at home
in every land is already strong.

"Perfect, however, is he to whom the
whole world is exile."

Nomad of the interior
unsettled man, leave
the cities of Sumer
go back to **edin**,
the steppe beyond **ambar**, the marsh, make
for the open outside you came from

("in magnificence hoof thunder silence of
pines and birches across the taiga")
that outside place the city hicks
call **ki-sì-ga**, the leper's ward
those who fear even the word & have to pun it
into **ki-să-ga**, the "good place"
when only you know how good it is

but she too will join you there,
in banishment
when Sargon's city-slickers
win one for oriental despotism,

you too will join them, Enheduanna,
but not before you sing /

and Enheduanna sings her evocation of Inanna:

"You of the appropriate **me**'s, great queen of queens,
"Issued from the holy womb, supreme over the
mother who bore you
"Omniscient sage, lady of all the lands,
"Sustenance of the multitudes, I have sung your
sacred song!

"Tree goddess, fit for the **me**'s, it is exalting to
acclaim you.
"Merciful brilliant righteous woman, I have recited your
me's for you!"

ANDREW JORON

THE BOOK IS AN ABSTRACT CANDLE

Avian V
Above, below
    disturbance of the thinking reed.

Look that stirs stars—
Answering reflection.

The *whiteness* not yet bled dry.

"The problem of content"
    is this prayer.
First & last, uncanny sentinels
Visible only to the voice.

To distinguish sound from its shadow—

To extinguish, then
    to quell
The cold equations—candle
    & marrow, blood & burning.

An apprehension, as of symbols—
An intense repose

    pages the moments: ages the mirages.

(To be turned toward facelessness.)

Where, exfoliated of exile–
Words are uncreated mouths, music corrupted
    into meaning.

Perhaps the geometry of a lament–
The travail
    of Earth's *intellectual surface*
    chambered with doubt.

A weighted wood, a conditional

That leaves leaves
    to the seasons later than winter

    –seasons of seizures & caesuras.

JANET KAUFFMAN

ON ELIMINATING CHARACTERS FROM FICTION

1.
If you don't say the name of a person, a good many things are possible in a sentence, and even in a landscape without margins or verifiable boundaries. It is possible to turn a corner and encounter a large machine lifting trees out of the ground. You can read the lettering on the metal, letters and numbers that are a code name for the machine, but it is certainly not the name of a person. Heaps of trees in full leaf may be stacked in the middle of the road. It is possible to see the beginnings of flames among the branches, and if you wait long enough, not very long actually, turn slightly to the side, and still not saying the name of a person, you can walk through the fire and into the house it's become.

2.
It's akin to making a hat from sticks. The handwork and gluing are not at all sweatshopped. Not jetted or crashed into wetlands, not magically rising up out of it whole and crowned. You can count the prepositions, cross-fingered, coming up from to out of, especially. And it is a cityscape here. Swept. There's plenty of sand for the froth of some sea.

3.
Okay, explain how many celebrations it takes to call them off and quit firing k-k-k-k-k-k-k into clouds, fireworks falling onto cottonwoods where they spit jewelry and metal chunks of Pontiacs, the whole river valley flipped to an attic with clothing on dummies, strings of paper lights burning; how many long naps with sun-block and hand-held missile launchers, before night and nothing else falls, and time (paying no attention to all the fucking goodbyes) passes.

4.
And the story that stops with somebody saying fare-thee-well to somebody must be false. Even if there's scenery in the fade-out. A dead tree, say. Even if the kid says something like, "I'll get those chives chopped now, Mother." Even if he says, "Bring me my goose gun." He

goes inside, and in the middle of chive-chopping, or later, maybe stories later, fork in his hand, he's opening his mouth.

5.
Remember. Indoors, the outgoing door opens in. As a usual thing. Outdoors, the ingoing door opens out. And in a house of many doors, such as the city, the distinction, inside to out, may be difficult, an habitual mystery, what with the trees and jungle paraphernalia of tattoo shops and the concrete bedding and awned walkways under the air. Guess where you are. It is impossible to be a stranger to the climates of seven continents. And others. There are several others. The forearm registers low-lying air, off the chocolate pecan tub; and the various underground weathers rise, usually visibly, against the knee, the thigh. There is the underarm atmosphere, too - dank, hair sweet. Temperature and steam and aroma, these ephemera, forewarn the way advertising forewarns: by assertion, mild haste, dispersal. It slips by. But if you open a door, out or in, to look at an advertisement, that is another story. If you open a door, flat on the ground, to look at a subway, a grotto, that's another story, too. Consider the number of doors. It is morning in Detroit. You can open a door and see sixteen bolts of hand-woven purple fabric. You can open a door and see the wooden step and the marigolds. You can open a door and see a woman pull at her own nipples. It is midday. You can see the man in the green hat on the sidewalk. You can see brickwork. The sky is there, plain as a cake. The blue ceiling. The blue floor. The blue door.

6.
Debris, homespun, flim-flamming with shrouds, cast-offs, that is the handwork of what's-her-name in her shift, her hair woven to ladders. It is the paradox of her escape, she climbs down, she cuts her hair, more flotsam to figure out. She is gone, gone, a nervy babe, like a one-time flier, flimsy above the globe and going down. Oh, those are the syllables she sings out, oh, oh.

7.
On its own, narrative goes to nature. His tongue between her toes, or hers his, they roll in a tire, say, one way and another, steel-belted, hot as the highway, it's Utah anyhow, the salt flats, fast with their fingers between their thighs. They don't know which way they'll roll next, whoever's story it is. Is this day the equinox? They're spun, they shut their eyes to cut out confusion, and hollows open up behind their knees and, see, it's Salt Lake between them. They lick whatever they

can, and slow. It's not true, but people say it: this is the ocean that used to be.

8.
Recall the trees, their ex-foliage - in French, a construction more tactile. In fiction, the mouth is the place of trees, whole: root, trunk, limb, leaf, seed, node, scar, tooth, tip, pit, lobe.

9.
It's raining, and yes, somewhere the avalanches strip stones from the hill, wing-scrapes. There is so much motion the sow-bugs roll downhill, and then the artillery opens up and shells hit the three-story apartment buildings at 16 Ferdinand Place and the windows flare. They have exploded now. The gnats called phantom gnats with fringed antennae as large as wings, the ones walking the corners of the glass, they are in the air now, and you've flown here, your baggage is so light.

10.
They're sleeping in a row, labeled, you can look, it's not like tags on their toes, but they've got a line or two over their heads, bookish, like poets, maybe they *are* poets, side by side, you can call up their files at the windows. They've been asleep, arranged in some fashion, and now we're here messing up the sheets, good god, air the place out, open another door. Even your mother says, there's more than scenery out there. You can look both ways, and then another, the first disturbance is the most disturbing, and after that you can read the books with the bad titles, and make love this way, one leg over the shoulder.

KAREN KELLEY

INSIDE KAREN KELLEY

Inside me, Cy Twombly is a figure at the window in a checkered skirt, quixotic, demeanor swerving from tough guy to spoiled child. He pronounces the wall-relief kitsch. There follow strange doings inside a large sack: four men and one woman. Blunted shapes and open, frontal contours crowd one another upon the burlap surface.

The painful brightness, the panicked sense of being saddled with this absurd name—*Karen Kelley, Karen Kelley, Karen Kelley, Karen Kelley*—which I constantly intone. *D 'ya want Daddy ta fuck ya?* asks Marlon Brando inside the bag.

I'm Queen of My Room, but this confusion about men and women is disjunctive, hallucinatory, like strokes visible at the sides or bottom edges of innumerable hesitations and qualifications in the definition of this monster: the creature, cooked whole in grease, is curled up beyond recognition. Its eyes, luminous, contain an immediacy of address and an irresolvable instability.

Maul me. Take me. Come in, says the monster, my favorite monster, with its pink tongues inside its burlap beak swelling to an alarming degree: it is terrible and frightening to see matter being pulled into a black hole at a speed of more than 6 million miles per hour, a black hole five feet high with a seven foot wingspan that chokes me to hold inside.

It's a permanent opening just under my breastbone: a strange feature, exotic, lined with adrenal glands that look like birds' claws or twigs. It's a source of embarrassment: exposed to the air it exhales waves of an intensifying fragrance—the flowery, so-called "smell of fear"—even as it recedes, a peculiar anatomical Doppler effect.

The only way the helpful policeman has been able to "fix" me up to now is by clasping me to the slippery periscope of biological material he insists that together we create. He squints into me furiously and

claims to see my every experience half-erased on its axis of heartbroken tenderness and incomplete gesture. At least that's how I put it. He says: *the bottom halves of things are hard to take your eyes off of.*

Surely we must mean the same thing.

ROBERT KELLY

THE SOUND OF THE CENTER

masaniyeh
the tree of
death the fatal
blossoms of opera, the plaintive
doo-wop of our ceremonies
of love

orgasm you great tree
grows up through the core
of me the animal
howls at the limit of what we mean
the other speaks

that is the real sound
soft howl
wolf growl
of love coming
to love

limping through the
jungle of what you left of me
try to find a name
I can identify,
something like west or wolf
or wheat
but all I can find
is thing after thing,
useless to me
not knowing the operative
word

so wake up
is treefall
bough breaks
baby fall
into speech

every language
is another language
when you're asleep

and no word means a thing

That's why Blake
drew so many
snakes and vines and tendrils round
the empty places where the words would be
between the words that could be said

the words that could be written down
are not the words,

the space between
says everything

he filled with snakes and roots and vineleaves to remind.

MILTON KESSLER

NEW MONTH

Walk toward the epicenter of leaves on grass
struggle to keep carrying heavy bones
as I must each biblical day
far from any bench
and without breath Exhale Expire
Sonia watches from a distant table reads.

I failed to find help in the tools of poetry. When asked
what was wanted,
fell into deafness—rain.
Pain became
frozen reason .

To make up for the years without you, reader, I hug
suffering and illness
which comfort me like the shoulders of a sweet roll
at Reznikoff's.

Glassdoor opens
and sunlight stands in the room,
competing with blankness.
"Who are you,"she says, irritable
that balance is challenged.
"I am ice," it says, " the origin of things."
It starts to climb and she follows, melting as they descend.

He rubs his embedded fingers as I write as if
he was making
fire,
faster and faster he swirls them,

a beggar
rolling a warm nut.

How can I leave you, reader, just having found you again
in your corner-seat, empty pages shaking.

But I have an appointment with sleep .
No rimes left for subway souls.

Wife worked hard today
baking and laundry. Her legs cold
as she goes to bed. Pull quilt over
her shoulder.
Go down to pay debts.
Nov. 1, '99 We 51 yrs
this season.

(for ERK 1902-1999)

R.B. KITAJ

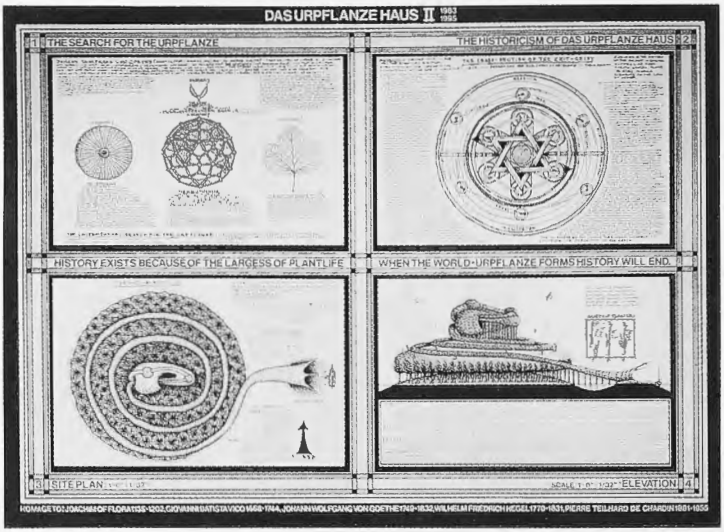
TWO PAINTINGS

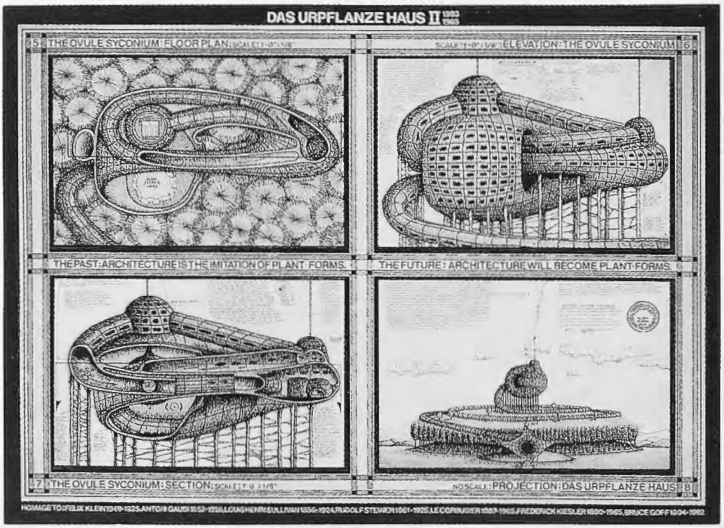
The Cleveland Indian, 1995–1998
Oil on Canvas; 60 x 36"

Second Diasporist Manifesto, 1997–1998
Oil on Canvas; 60 x 60"

PAUL LAFFOLEY

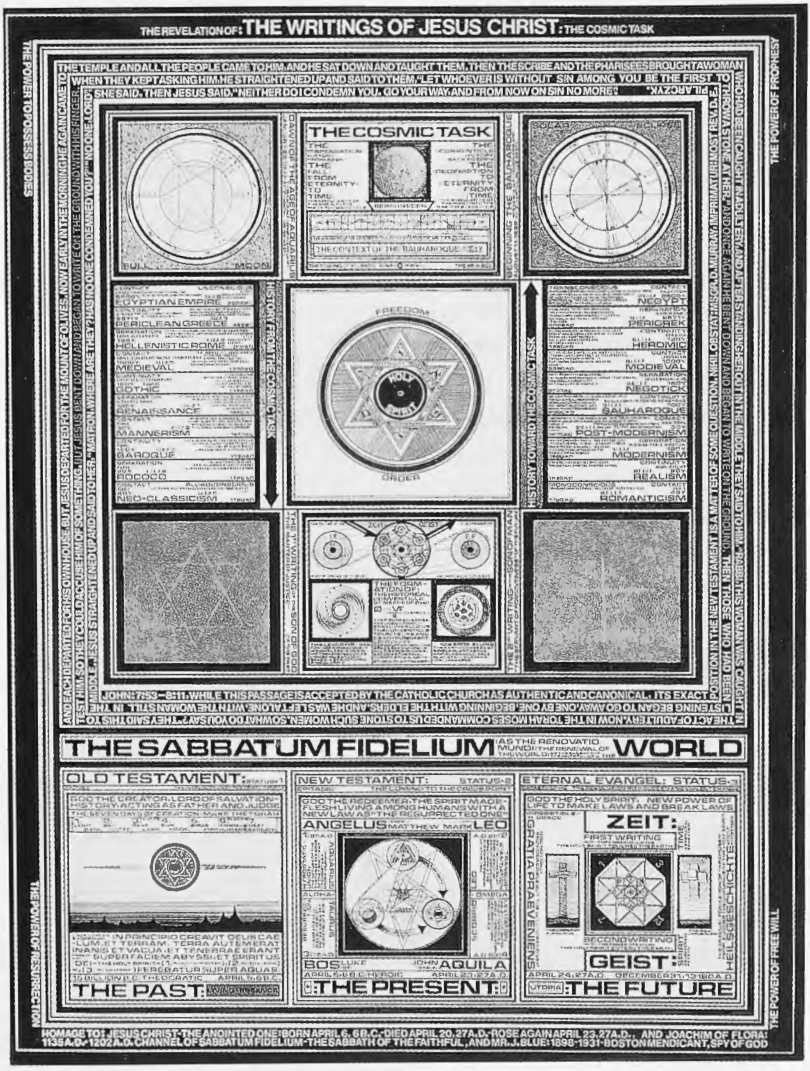
TWO WORKS


DAS URPFLANZE HAUS II
1983
1985
1 THE SEARCH FOR THE URPFLANZE
THE HISTORICISM OF DAS URPFLANZE HAUS 2
HISTORY EXISTS BECAUSE OF THE LARGESS OF PLANT LIFE
WHEN THE WORLD-URPFLANZE FORMS HISTORY WILL END.
3 SITE PLAN
ELEVATION 4


DAS URPFLANZE HAUS II
1983
1985
5 THE OVULE SYCONIUM: FLOOR PLAN
ELEVATION: THE OVULE SYCONIUM 6
THE PAST: ARCHITECTURE IS THE IMITATION OF PLANT FORMS
THE FUTURE: ARCHITECTURE WILL BECOME PLANT FORMS
7 THE OVULE SYCONIUM: SECTION:
PROJECTION: DAS URPFLANZE HAUS 8

Das Urpflanze Haus, 1983–1996

Size for each format: 30 x 40"; Ink, Letters on Board; the design for a house composed of various plant species all grafted together by means of parts from the ginkgo biloba tree, and some genetic enginerring. Homage to Johannes Wolfgang von Goethe



The Writings of Jesus Christ, 1997

32½ x 42½"; Ink, Letters, Color Inks, Sand, and Photomontage on Board; the mysterious writings of Jesus which reveal the cosmic task of the universe. Homage to Jesus Christ

GERRIT LANSING

THE JOINT IS JUMPING

Whose joint? Pass me one, please,
et suce ma bite. What's the time?
Across the great divide the caravans tick,
and tremulous, we unlocked our hearts,
lips on lips, AHA the stars were bright
as fell the fullness we fall into, not two not won,
a foretaste, cool hole of in-between, pleroma.

We lop the moon, invoking hazard's sorites
our sorties through the orient gates.
Tumulus, the earthly place of such angelic music,
is lively now, jumps, is locus where we slither out of time.

KARIN LESSING

DUNE LIGHT

Shadow—
cloths, pinned

and un-
pinned

settle, again
rise

night—
drift, its opiate

crests

*

a grain, each night,

lodges another

whispers from further a-
way, from under

glitter debris

*

as when
a morning glory fainteth

wind,

planter, scythe

your wandering
drought, your whet-

stones

*

like voices

or the hills
suddenly wavering

where
it diamonds

their meeting
slopes

*

medusas of sand

each word, once
murmured

grows a shadow

in the shadow of the great rock, a

hiding place

*

not a breath nor bird's cry

merely the cane-brakes'
amphibious, ligatured
lives

persist, still audible

*

foam
made a curtain, was

flood-gate, en-
gaged

where you, it
was you

that went under, entered

*

shivered,

fibrous
and shivered

as the finger that
lights them

In dune-
light

keeping distance
undiminished

*

to drown the lights. . .

as if, deeper
than
sleep

the void
unspinning itself, its colors

*

towards the wind's edge
driven

palm-grove of stars, the almost

rounded
night.

advancing

sand

you fall,

fall
beyond measure

***

JOSE LEZAMA LIMA

PAVILION OF NOTHINGNESS

(Trans. from the Spanish
by Roberto Tejada)

I join the screw
posing questions in the wall,
a lackluster sound
color covered with a blanket.
But I falter and momentarily
blind, I can barely feel myself.
All at once, I call it to mind,
with my fingernails I tunnel
a tokonoma in the wall.
I need a tiny hollow,
it's there I go diminishing
to reappear anew,
to touch myself and set my forehead in its place.
A tiny hollow in the wall.

Multiplier of weariness
the café I'm sitting in,
the insistent daiquiri
returning like a face of no use
for death, for springtime.
With my hands I trace the length
of a lapel that feels cold to me.
I wait for no one and I insist
on someone's pressing arrival.
All at once, with my fingernail
I draw a tiny crevice on the table.
There it is, the tokonoma, the hollow,
I'm in company unrivaled,
a corner conversation in Alexandria.
We're together in a round

of skaters through the Prado.
He was a child who inhaled
all the tenacious dew from the sky,
even then with the hollow, like a cat
that circles the whole body
with a silence full of flickerings.

Within reach of what surrounds us,
and close to our body,
the stubborn notion that says our soul
and its enwrapment fit
inside a tiny hollow in the wall
or on tissue paper scratched with a fingernail.
I'm diminishing
I'm a point that disappears and returns
and I fit full-length inside the tokonoma.
I make myself invisible
and on the verso I recover my body
swimming at the beach,
encircled by bachelors of art with banners of snow,
mathematicians and baseball players
describing sapodilla ice cream.
The hollow is smaller than a deck of cards
and it can be as big as the sky,
but we can shape it with our fingernail
along the brim of a coffee cup
or in the sky that falls beside our shoulder.

The beginning is united with the tokonoma,
in the hollow a kangaroo can hide
without forfeit of its bounding joy.
The apparition of a cave is
mysterious and begins to disentangle its dreadful.
To hide there is to tremble,
the hunter's horns resound
in the frozen forest.
But the hollow is soothing,
we can lure it with a thread
and usher it out of insignificance.

I scrape the wall with a fingernail,
slivers of lime crumble down
as though they were shards
from the celestial tortoise shell.
Is the barrenness in the hollow
the first and final path?
I fall asleep, in the tokonoma
the other still walking is the one I evaporate.

1 April & 1976

LINH DINH

TWO POEMS

CONVERSION TABLE

A stick of carrot is equal to a gilliflower.
A gilliflower is equal to a drum of gasoline.
A drum of gasoline is equal to a stick of carrot.
"For the sake of my offspring, I think I'll marry an outsider."

Tamerlane has been sighted in Northern Italy.
Jesus has broken out in Inner Mongolia.
They like to kiss outside and piss inside.
We like to kiss inside and piss outside.

A mosquito has a mouth but no asshole.
After three drops of blood, he falls asleep.
He only gets up to bite another mosquito.
He sucks and he sucks.
Inside this balloon are ten thousand mosquitoes.

In my left fist is a fossil of the first butterfly.
In my right fist is a theory on why blood trickles down men's legs.

A man gains a drop of blood per day from eating.
Each night, he gets up to slash himself
Across the face and wrist.
He must be bitten by ten thousand mosquitoes.
He sucks and he sucks.
Where would all that blood go otherwise?

Once a month, a woman drops a teacup on the floor,
A fine teacup with bones inside it.

Vietnamese and Germans now speak the same language.
Prussians and Bavarians cannot understand each other.

NATIVITY

I was born astride a suckling pig.
Inside this pig was a fancy mirror
With instructions scratched onto it
On how to slaughter a suckling pig.

I was born with two or three stomachs
Astride a fancy mirror,
In a country larger than this map.

Eat me now, said the clam.
Eat me next, said the chicken.
Eat me tomorrow, said the cow.
Eat me last, said the suckling pig.

I'll look for a suckling pig, said the first midwife.
I'll look for an extra long knife, said the second midwife.
I'll look for a fancy mirror, said the third midwife.

You don't know, where I was born,
There were thousands and thousands
Of suckling pigs, long knives and fancy mirrors.

There were nearly everything there was in this world.
At least one faithful reproduction of each thing.

NATHANIEL MACKEY

GO LEFT OUT OF SHANTIVILLE

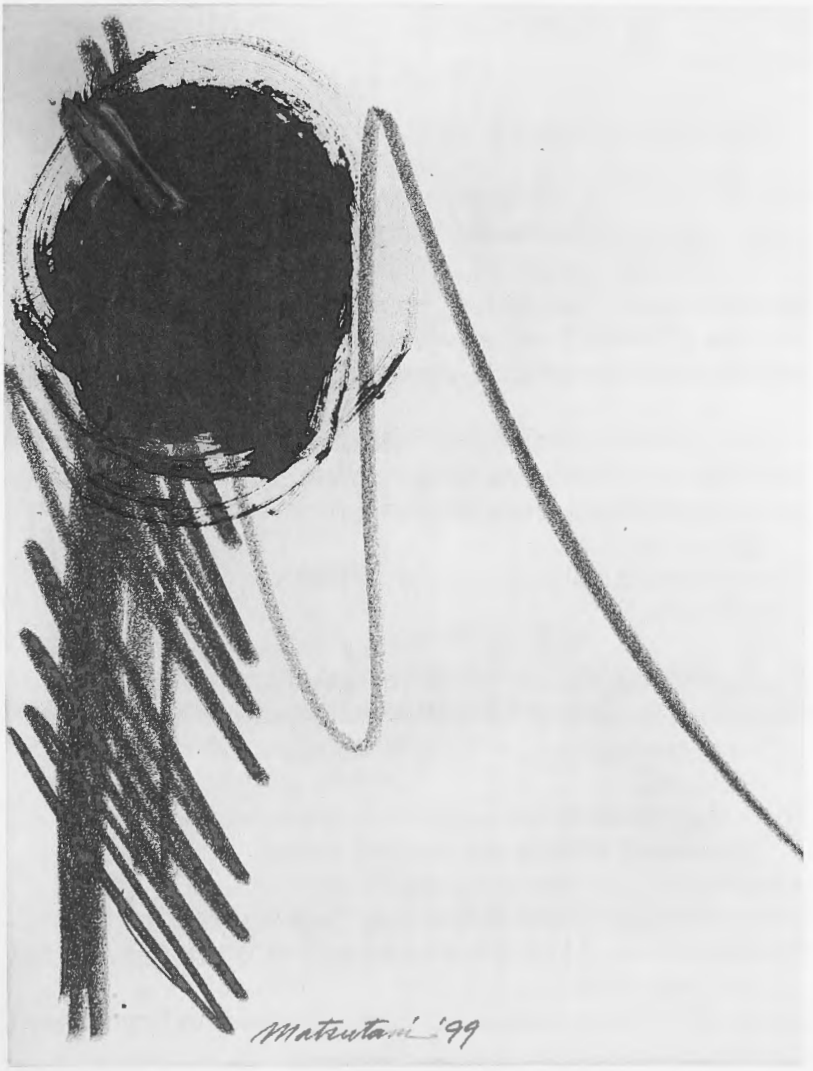
—"mu" twenty-second part—

Say-it-again got hold of us, we
shook. Now neither Paris nor
Peru was it we were in...
We
were in Jamaica, St. Ann's Bay, a
parish peril had to do with, perish
we thought it was we heard. We
heard a music made of swoon, sway.
Swing had its way with us as
well. . .
An unanswered message on the
machine rewound repeatedly, played
again, thin balm against what
ravage would come. A sunken isle
it
seemed we lay washed up on,
adrift on the ythmic, no sooner
up than gone, dawned on as
though
our new day had now come, "mu"
suffusing the otherwise desert air. . .
In the moving cubicle it arose we
were in. . .Right sides and
shoulders, right sides of heads,
pressed
against the window and wall as we
went left, pushed by the
bend we rounded, large-arced

embankment our departure
cut...
Sipped sand, so long without
water. Lone Coast elixir, mouths
drawn shut. . .Euthanasic lip-stitch,
loquat liqueur, Oliloquy Valley it
was
we came to next. . . We were
each an apocryphal Moses, feet
newly fitted with sandals, we
strolled, scrolls long thought to
be lost unrolled in front of us,
dubbed
acoustic scribbling, skanked. . .
Tumbling water filled my head, I fell
out laughing, sand so long the one
thing
met my lip. Two words, *One love,*
kept repeating, an asthmatic wuh
whose we dwelled elsewhere, scattered,
worldwide auction block. . .
Cropped air, coaxed inhalation. . .
Music
the breath we took. . .It was only
there we wanted to be, the everywhere
we'd always wanted, ours,
albeit
only an instant, forever, never to be
heard
from again

MATSUTANI

TWO DRAWINGS


Matsutani '99

JACKSON MAC LOW

THERE A DIFFERENT TIME-SENSE IS SIMPLY NON-COMPETITIVE (Stein 77)

There a different time-sense is simply a different difficulty.

The difference is satisfactory, so the difficulty is simple.
Does the difference make for a different difficulty anyway?
Looking perfectly difficult, it is naturally different.

Looking perfect, the difficulty is naturally different.
The difficulty is different, simply different,
Are things better or more nearly perfect because they are different?
There where the different is simply difficult, the difference is different.

Does a different time-sense make that difficulty satisfactory?
That's simple: already the time-sense because it is a different time-sense makes the acceptance of the difficulty different.
There they prepared for a different, more satisfactory happening, though war seemed better.
Were the insiders' refusals satisfactory?
Different compositions would have been satisfactory.
Their words would have had to do with satisfactory work, not with war work.
Lord!—the almost classical simplicity that leads to important refusals!

Are beautiful things connected with beings that are beautiful?
Are those beings' first efforts at composition accepted by them?
Are the beautiful things connected with the beautiful things

they are being?
Do these things come from the beings that they are?
Does their time-sense or the things they are being lead to those things?
The grey, beautiful things there are connected with the things they are being.
That is, the things they are being are connected with those things.
What they are being is creating those things.
Speak, grey classic, where is creating entering?
Everyone knows that compositions are not created as a matter of course.
All are made by those already prepared.
Anybody may be already prepared.

Naturally, their works are perfectly different and perfectly connected.
Naturally, contemporaries, being different, are not non-competitive.
They are perfectly connected.

Their contemporaries too create connectedly.
As contemporaries, whatever they create is connected.
Why aren't they naturally non-competitive?
Why can't they, though naturally different, be non-competitive?

New York: 25-27 May 1999

MICHAEL MCCLURE

THINKING OF SU TUNG-P'O

AMONG ROSES THE ABSENCE OF THORNS
I
S
the absence
of perfume.
Facts skim like duckweed
over the surface of worlds,
worlds
with
I
M
A
G
I
N
E
D
billowings of nonstuff
shaping
boulders and mackerel
and lincolns,
worlds in which
I free-float
imagining
a battle

when there is nothing
but the rattle
of seeds in a case
inventing springtime.

THIS BODY
will be
no Body
but mine.

Then
Gone

GWEN MCVAY

TWO POEMS

THREE OF

rocks : sedentary,
metaphoric, and hideous,

tastes: bittersweet, salt, and sour

I dreamed a third bat, this one green
What sciences divide the unconscious colorizes,

senses : smell, trust, and fearing

Pick a card, any card–aha,
thumbs
bat's thumb
prints of thumbs

the Three o' Craw–
three craw sat upon a wa'
third craw wasna there at a'
in the song
but the
That's my study,

humors : limp, vile, and blood

As a bat creeps down a façade, no suicide but a surprise,
I dreamed the world was in on my secret in my Maidenform bra

Three of anything, that's a fine hand

SOME FIELDS

fuck you he said fuck fuck
you cancer and a hole opened

Ginsberg and Burroughs visited
last night to tell about it droll uncles

fuck you he said fuck fuck you cancer
and a scratched round light in a coal tunnel

his favorite saying swans' wings
forming the gesture of granting wishes

fuck you time present future time past you're
all nothing and I can prove it wearing silk hats

the voodoo clowns led him into bardo
wearing fuck you he hefts his thigh bone

[for Rick Fields]

Ana Mendieta

from SILUETA SERIES

Silueta Series, 1979
Earth-body work

PAUL METCALF

THE END

you've got to know
that the end of me
is all the way out

the butt of me
is exposed. that
once the change

has been made it
cannot be changed
back again.

HENRI MICHAUX

from THE RAVAGED ONES

(Trans. from the French
by James Wanless)

Sometime in the past, this one had learned to paint, made pictures that conformed to the standards of his teachers, drawing forms their way, rendering matter, colors, life.

In this place where he is being kept since a serious setback, he has just been given some painting supplies, watercolors, sheets of paper, brushes.

Trouble. New uncertainties added to his anxiety. Forms? What forms? It is formlessness, his current condition, that he should express to himself, if he must express something.

As for color. . .,it's colorlessness that's his problem these days. How can colors convey the absence of color, the loss of color?

And life. . .it makes no sense anymore, life, it is the exact opposite, non-life, that he is experiencing, that he suffers, that he sees, life agape, life frozen, the silence, the stillness, the impenetrability of beings, that's what he will express, more or less, with what means he has.

The face he is painting, stripped of its color, sponged twenty times, and which he is trying to lighten still further, is so pale that it seems no more than the former location of a faint odor, or the vacant site where a face had been .

So too vanishes the diminished body, devoid of thickness, here and there uncompleted, as if to have the whole of it were

unnecessary. Some parts meticulously rendered, others just a blank, nothing at all, *terra incognita.*

Arms—what use are arms now?—one of them detailed but lacking a point of insertion on the naked body, the other ending abruptly. . .in a plantule. The plant kingdom, essentially that's where he is these days, equally without animation, without plans, without thoughts. Inert. Discontinued arm, with twigs at the end, being visited calmly by insects.

Gaping open, defenseless, a body inundated, as on oceanographic charts of regions where the inundations of the sea cut into the coast, smashing it up, shredding it.

Readily, "nothingness" replaces the flesh.

Between the legs, a void rises continuously to the region of the heart, up between the ribs all the way to the chest, which it splits in half, and finally stops; there, a faint semblance of a frail body timidly, delicately takes form once again, as if made of pink petals.

Being, no more than a memory; vague, fragmentary, hard to set in motion. The man (what's left of him) a curtain, a thin curtain.

Relations with those around him will be painful.

CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON

MAGDALENA, HER SHADOW

Walter carpenters and so does Beth—
And well they do it. Even to wash a car,
Cultivate vegetables, play a flute,
Promises to propel active sense,
With all good reason, to a point of closure.

A work, perfected, your doorpost, or
Desk of noble cherry,
Comes to exist, its fit and polish the fruit
Of a doing, so you can stand there, finite,
Watch how it was figured, now is done.

The music also inhabits wood
Or shines in chrome, cabbage leaf;
It might be in the beetroot, crimson
And ebullient. How very nice, humming,
To have whittled a top,

Then watch your ancient child whipping it;
At solving an equation she is consummate:
On a green screen objective digits line up,
The thing is done, a stream of instants
Penned in a pond, she puts a sparkle in it.

The carpenter strips his apron off,
Picks the shavings from his plane blade;
The market gardener, with his fingertips,
Is gratified by the cool, the luscious
Character of the leaf they palp.

When the flautist places one domed
Tip of a forefinger over the last hole
And blows, into a silver cave, his dying breath,
Time has to stop awhile.
Concerted

The universe contracts. We are promised afresh
To a beginning coiled in the end of everything.
Yes, Walter carpenters and so does Beth,
And Jack is seeing to our supply
Of potable water. Tomorrow and tomorrow

We shall swim in the river, drink it,
The dragon's breath will not have scorched
Our flutes, our desks, our cabbages.
In the shadow of that wizened woman,
Clothed in her hair, are we so sheltered?

Who walked away, into the oven, then shut
its door, the desert, once and for all she washed
Those feet in ancient time, now she walks
Hauling for ever her wrinkles and her long
Weightless shadow, where we cook.

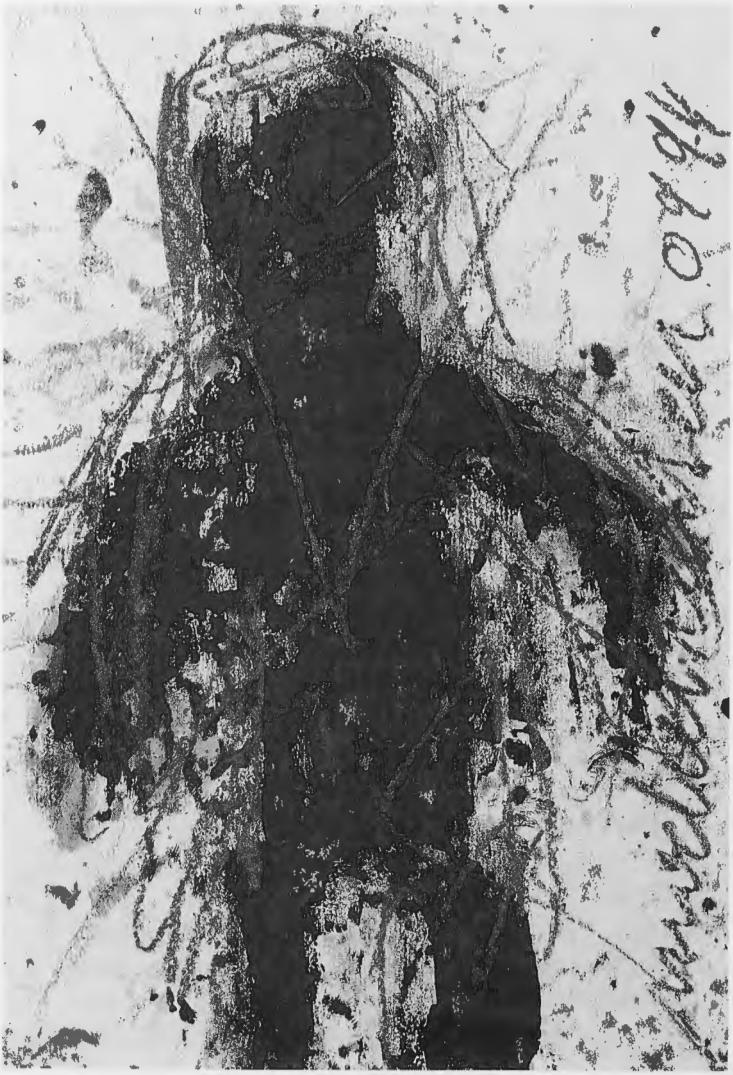
So to have woken once in the lover's arms
While twilight roused birdsong in the Spring
—She's gone, he's gone, and still the twitter
Is Carolina wren, is cardinal, a finch
Opens a floating maze for thought

(The end of the world come round again)

To dance with memory in. Together
They warm the maze. They are weaving still
Magdalena, her shadow in the kitchen,
And Walter, with his hammer, works the wax,
Assembling plume by plume for Icarus the wings.

MICHEL NEDJAR

TWO PAINTINGS



Brian Nissen

TWO SCULPTURES

Irazu
Bronze

Quetazal
Bronze

LORINE NIEDECKER

NOTES FROM THE TRIP

an excerpt from Lorine Niedecker's
extended composition notes for her
poem "Lake Superior"
[edited by Jenny Penberthy]

Doty: Mackinaw country—Island: Many of the rocks are crusted over with calcareous spar, particularly at Robinson's Folly.

St. Mary's R. Here are whitefish of superior quality

white, red and grey sandstone in river at Soo

Grand Marais, 21 miles from the Two Hearted River (Michigan)

"as the season shifts"

S: "no ardent spirits shall be hereafter introduced under any pretence, into the Indian country"

Schoolcraft River

a lake, Plantagenette (The Rest in the Path) water fowl shot—the mallard, wood-duck, sawbill

Towards Rainy R. from North Shore—ospreys dive for fish and eagles swoop down to rid them of their catch. Timber wolves, bear, beaver. Frenchmen came there early 18th century to look for the Sea of the West. Scene 20 years ago now much the same as then

The peace pipe the war chief smoked with his heart

Indians–S: "a life of want and vicissitude"

"lakes of a pondy character, redolent with nymphae odorata, thru which we successfully passed."

"the naked solitudes of Red River"

32 ft. long canoe

"a portage of four pauses"

lake–its outlet of a spreading, sandy shelly character–no Indian nor French name so as Mr. Johnston shot a deer here we named the lake after him. Sibly Lake (other notes)

un chanson du voyageur

He presented a pipe

Miss. R. Valley–the great carboniferous limestone formation which fills it.

At home we're in the drowned lands–trees standing permanently in the water.

"We slept on a kind of bog which the men call *Tetes des femmes*.

treaty of limits between the tribes

Pike (of Pike's Peak) when he went up the Miss. R.–north of the St. Croix R. he said the river (Miss. I take it) became "black in the depths and clear in sandy shallows."

calcite–a native calcium carbonate also called calc spar, occurring in many crystalline forms, such as chalk, marble, etc. . .

The face of the earth is a graveyard and so it has always been.

My inner midwest

I was in a St. Ignace fog

Why this fascination with rock terms, name, probably because we like to think the first geologists took their finds and created them–name to thing–out of the nature of things–plus sometimes their sound or reflection of colour that delighted their senses.

VALERE NOVARINA

TIME'S ANIMAL (END)

(Trans. from the French
by Allen S. Weiss)

Animals, anaimals, stamp your feet on the old earth, and arise to imitate man by nodding: he curses his entire earth when it is earthbound and blesses it by his presence. He shall fall from it, beyond action, when all the light shall be completed. All the light shall be eaten at the same time as the blood. I suddenly heard, in my clay of deafness, the sempiternal tale of nothing that says. I felled from the sky all that he says, I imitated the world of my words and I heard nothing. Man of the Hole Bohu, which flesh grabs you, grub? Why do you know all those words? Is it you yourself who found yourself and who lifted yourself up from so low? What do they say? When we see what we see, when we know what we know, we are right to think what we think. When we say what we say, and thus do and thus say, what more can be added? If I see what I perceive, I made this journey with glee. Why has the flesh taken on the appearance of words? How is it that we speak? Let the meat express itself! This shouldn't be spoken to the animals. Day of my eyes, are you always the night, or only the view of he who sees? I must say this to those women who sympathize with me, if there are any: they will well understand.

What does the beast say when it is called? It returns to itself and hushes up.

Amnimals, omnimals, I admit to have eaten but one single body of a man in my entire life: my own, which is, except for your own.

If right now a dog suddenly entered outside of us, we would tell it to leave immediately. For we have forgotten the race of animals from which human glory was made. Let man himself now have life if he can, without music. Me, I will see my own dead body that leaves when I leave with my music with joy. One day I played the horn like this all alone in a splendid woods, and the birds were becalmed at my feet when I named them one by one with their names two by two: Pimwhite, Sandkill, Partch, Dart, Stiltback, Goskit, Persill, Peeve, Phyllist, Corntail Burgeon, Flit, Titibit, Queedle, Jewet, Phew, Marshquiver, Graywhip, Corvee, Tausk, Rillard, Preem, Peterwil, Caasenut, Flusher, Willowgyre, Trillet, Pelosi, Silverwisp, Eidereye,

Wheeltail, Ptyt, Chipper, Arbortwill, Jeebill, Binche, Tristin, Wheatspit, Wern, Ivrette, Rosset, Purnt, Wranter, Bussy, Flittern, Snowhit, Barnscrub, Pintuff, Trube, Powitt, Grant, Pergola, Flipe, Stonelover, Writ, Perforant, Tewhawk, Churwit, Palmette, Coldfisher, Voxe, Ginny, Crown, Barnfool Junkie, Cassand, Jasper, Tealdown, Looke, Binette, Jopbeak, Kwoit, Redgyre, Swoop, Peent, Clairon, Lowl, Chopine, Whirrlee, Silte, Crownbib, Yellowringer, Queedlebill, Kurm, Javer, Limmet, Quosch, Skell, Moonlet, Wingshriek, Tippen, Sassbeak, Pit, Tompic, Fisthawk, Whittlebill, Nightsweet, Galimat, Skuldove, Whitewill, Blackwhite, Kingcatcher, Flickleaf, Gruel, Trollop, Treespit, Kis.

CHARLES OLSON

POEMS FOR BET

[Elizabeth Kaiser came to Black Mountain College to continue piano study with Stefan Wolpe which had begun at the Juilliard School of Music. It was in the summer of 1954, with Connie away in a trial separation, that Olson and Bet became lovers. Little at present is known about the beginnings of the relationship beyond the account in Tom Clark's *Charles Olson: The Allegory of a Poet's Life* pp. 244-51. More will be made evident when Bet's diaries are published–they are currently being edited by Derrick Stone, with advance extracts in the *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society* #23/24 (January 1998) pp. 9-10.

The common-law marriage that began with the birth of Charles Peter Olson in April 1955 was of such ordinary intimacy that Olson seems not to have had to write of it much, neither in letters nor in poems, until it ended tragically with Bet's death in an automobile accident in March 1964. The elegy that Olson wrote, after a blankness of three months, is a most moving expression of loss. It is reprinted here from *The Maximus Poems* (California 1983) P. 420. In the miscellaneous manuscripts in the Olson archive at Storrs we find three short poems earlier and six short poems thereafter which we can have no hesitation in adding as poems of love and honor. These unpublished poems appear here through the courtesy of the Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs. Copyright © by University of Connecticut Libraries.–Ralph Maud]

[1]

I love the World, and until
it got to be one person
the Beloved, I did not know
Self.
When I did, in a corpse,
I was Born.

[2]

My love poem for you on
St. Joseph's Day

Walking the sand in the snow
the sense of you is so strong on me
it is: I could just fall into every drop of you

[3]

THE POEM YOU ASKED FOR FOR YOU

until nature is met
halfway as we go from birth
toward death the path

thereafter
no path

(half mine half
Charles Peter's)

[4]

MAXIMUS TO HIMSELF JUNE
1964

no more,
where the tidal river rushes

no more
the golden cloak (beloved
World)

no more dogs
to tear anything
apart—the fabric

nothing like
the boat (no more Vessel
in the Virgin's
arms

no more dog-rocks
for the tide
to rush over not any time again
for wonder

the ownership
solely
mine

[5]

the BIO-MORPHIC
MUST GO tale quale ipsum est

The Apple-Branch
(who was my wife

[6]

She did not know Evil
is true

Tues October 6 LXIV

[7]

Going to Bed At Night
—reading
trash. And she thought
I was (or did she? ?
kicking it—like Franz,
or Dan, Or Creeley. Or herself—pondering
the questions
of life.

John she'd
take care of—and Ed (Sanders)
she wouldn't know
what to make of
his irruptions
of private matters

Drummond Hadley
she didn't
know

Fri Oct 9th

[8]

I went full tilt
And then she was killed,
in her automobile

I need every bleeding minute now
I don't have any time for any new life

reading John Wieners'
Ace of Pentacles, Friday
October 9th 1964

[9]

Follow Bet
into the colors of her dress
and up the weak ladder
to the Face of God

Friday, October
9th Nineteen Sixty Four

[10]

Her skin
covered me, let light into me, held
my nature, kept me
for myself, and I wasn't sorry

to be closer. In the horrors and transparent
policy,
of the present. Montreal, the wharves
below Quai Cartier, the St Lawrence
very wide, we crossed
all sorts
of tracks, and the *Utterholm*
was ready to depart. She advised me
to take it, and I would have
if I'd had a passport. We went home
to our hotel.

Bet 2 (Friday night
October 9th,
1964

JOHN OLSON

HOW DO YOU DO

How do you do I am a glossy tabletop a sentimental fluorescence of Renaissance bile swollen with an obscure object of desire.

It is 1870. Crazy horse is planting words in the maternity of night. Tomorrow will erupt in forsythia and loons.

I looked into the eyes of a crow today and saw pachyderms, sackcloth, corpulence, insularity, naphtha and democracy. I decided then and there that the apparatus of storytelling can be modified to include the opium of participles and the beautiful black grapes of rampant speculation. A discussion for instance of early hominid activity on the radio. 2.5 million years ago near the east coast of Africa the hominids learned to chip flakes off of rocks and use them for scraping the meat of antelopes and three-toed horses from the bones. What was significant about this was the increase in protein, which promoted longevity, which promoted walking and suckling, which promoted leisure to learn the genius of Rocks.

In which case how do you do. In which case I am a gregarious mammal. In which case wars and real estate and ceremony and wax. In which case appoggiatura. In which case words bits of meaning like Calypso and zinc.

Today is a form of kettledrum. It is proportional to go barefoot. This may seem singularly erect but a shadow folded into recapitulation may also engorge with ink. This is so the image can attain the peripatetic amiability of Henry Miller in a sunlit pool talking about his childhood in Brooklyn.

Here in the house of music all movement is equal to rain. Let the signs empty themselves of salt and legislation. Let the illumination of Rome be achieved in reverie and hot sexual whispers. All it takes is a little moisture to make a spinal cord of silver and gold.

How do you do I want to penetrate shiver squirt sparkle and spin.

The accordion, in and of itself, is sufficient evidence of nudity.

How do you do I am both naked and insistent. How do you do I am holding the eyelid of a mimetic dent. How do you do I am a Cajun 45 from Louisiana. How do you do I am a bead of water running down the operating guide on the bottom lid of the washer. How do you do I am a consonant scorched with life. How do you do I am dilating into a hypaethral radiochemical button of ice. How do you do I am a woman's arm holding a footstep of extraordinary conjecture. How do you do I am a letter whose sound contains the stark chemistry of the penis. How do you do I am a blister of apprehension on the movie screen of a Bolivian aether.

How do you do I'm leaving. How do you do I'm hungry. How do you do my thumb is translucent. How do you do I am floating a raft of inflatable German. How do you do I am William Wordsworth pointing at nature. How do you do I'm a human emotion. How do you do I'm foolishly increasing my altitude. How do you do I'm completely covered with skin. How do you do I am a landscape settling on the bottom of a lake.

ROCHELLE OWENS

STARKNESS THE EYESOCKETS

Beyond cracks about SCARCITY
WANT Lucy's hands joined
her partner swings swings in
semicircle then fullcircle swings
thrusts out hip face to face
reflecting circles rows of repetitive
windows alternate swings in semicircle
spirals of her hair black silk hood
RED AND PALE PALE AND RED
opening windows following her
closely you look behind

Wednesday morning what observer really
sees each face blurred detaches
objects crashing down your skill
cutting wool Lucy female
surgeon brings to light WILDERNESS
her eye glides dark streak
translucent shells under her feet
floating above like a leaf driven
seven maidens WHITE as milk
it will be thursday tomorrow

Starkness the eye sockets nose
mouth & chin encapsulating Lucy's
life taste smell hearing
sight Lucy is sitting drawn
to The Book of Psalms she
raises her right hand whispers
is your disease a mind?

to each her own plague three
VICES three VIRTUES alternate
hope envy charity
sloth lust faith

When with her raised HANDS
stands against background
when the shutters of triptych
open with blindfold eyes
separates malt wine oats
a bowl held out to Lucy opening
plastic bags how her dress
of BLUE wool swings
swings in semicircle rows
of BLUE waterjugs under arched
windows tightens her black silk hood

Only the apple of Lucy's eye sees
"women's stuff" when you tell this
detail seven maidens horsing
around opening shutters of triptych
scratches word SCOURGE visible against
the background she searches under
salvaged two-by-fours splintered
rules for repairing porcelain
whole of her portrait 1000 years
back in time behind column
of archway RED AND PALE sun

Until ABSENCE falls spinal cord
detaches beyond slope of a fertile hill
you position the hidden sketch tightened
reins of a GRAY donkey heat
of indian summer observing how
she measures cracks in clay
ups and downs of plumber work racing
she then thinks a solitary life
it will be monday tomorrow
SLOTH LUST to each her own plague
like a HEART licked white

RON PADGETT

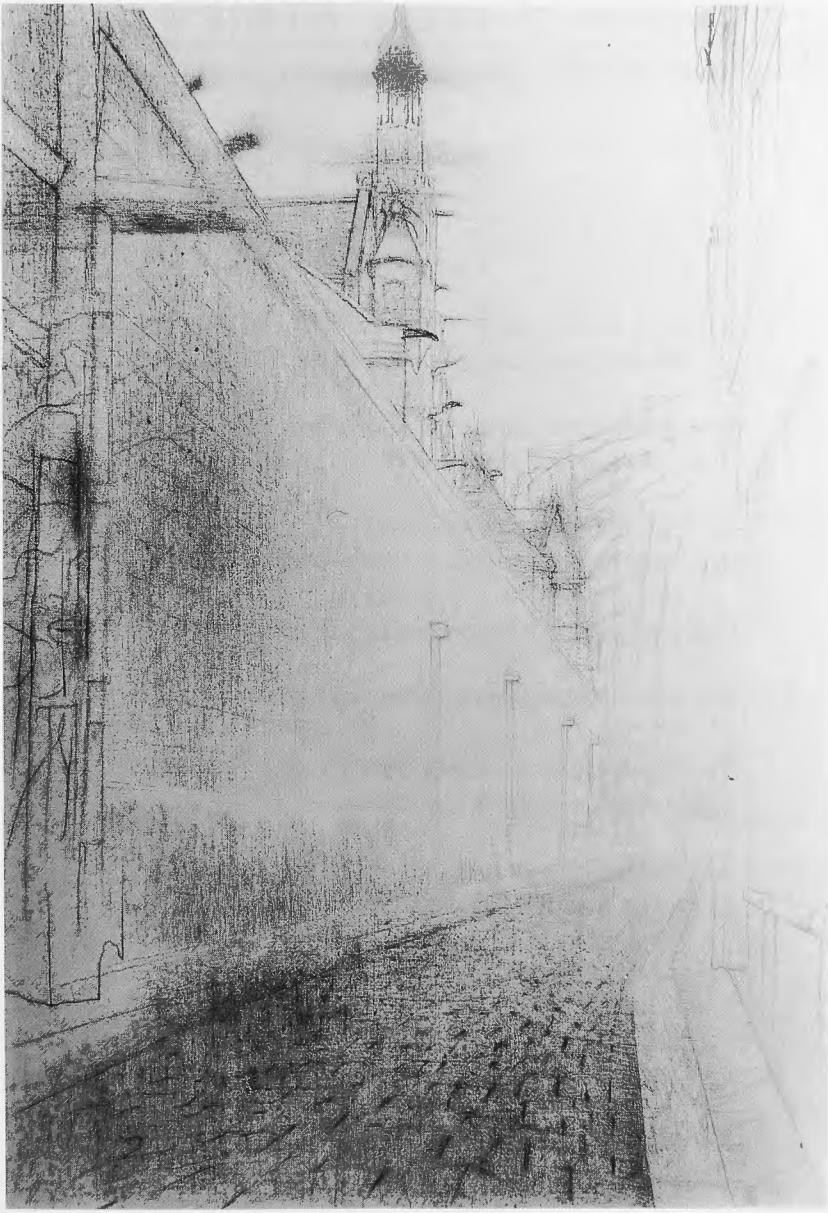
MORNING

Who is here with me?
My mother and an Indian man.
(I am writing this in the past.)
The Indian man is not a man,
but a wooden statue just outside
the limits of wood. My mother
is made of mother. She touches
the wood with her eyes and the eyes
of the statue turn to hers, that is,
become hers. (I am not dreaming.
I haven't even been born yet.)
There is a cloud in the sky.
My father is inside the cloud,
asleep. When he wakes up, he
will want coffee and a smoke.
My mother will set fire
to the Indian and from deep inside
her body I will tell her
to start the coffee, for even now
I hear my father's breathing change.

Irving Petlin

TWO DRAWINGS

Self-portrait, 1999
o/panel; 7½ x 7½"



The Street (Paris), 1999
Charcoal/pencil on linen; 59 x 43"

MICHAEL PALMER

OF

Of this photograph no one has taken

Eyes both a veil and sexual organ
The play as they always say

of light against shadow
first light than shadow then the shadow-play

Is it in color or black and white?

Yes it is in color or black and white

There are leaves drifting down,
a tiny skiff prepared to embark

across the waters of a painter's studio
toward a tower of clouds beyond the glass

The scatter of things

the room choking on pages
and the torn remnants of pages

No one to answer the telephone's ring
(Dearest Reader are there still phones still rings?)

They are afloat the two of them
in a sea of something

or perhaps they are drowning
or waiting for the wind to gather them up

into a palinode, a canticle, a stanza

If she has a question
will it go unasked?

(Are there still questions and questions unasked
Dearest Reader from the future-past?)

Berries brilliant orange on the hawthorn
this Wednesday late November

Blurred wing at the edge of the frame

Eyes unfocused lost in her
thoughts as they always say

Eyes at once fixed and in motion

gilded aleph emerging from her mouth
mouth emerging from her mouth

So, it's claimed, an age begins

This photograph no one has seen
offers itself in evidence

MARJORIE PERLOFF

FOR JACKSON MAC LOW

Who's at the core?
Whoever can rede an ode
Who can rede one?
Reece can—he did.
What was it about?
A roc.
Who was it by?
Ed—long ere this—told a Cree that it was by Rode.
Did his doing that erode anything?
No, according to Rod—but he may be in error.

There was an omen in a rote section one morn many years ago. It was only one em big in a photo with a piece on Borneo. Such a thing can enroot itself in your mind so you ponder it o'er and o'er for years. Sometimes it nearly makes you moon, like someone enchanted by Oberon, because its meaning's moot.

These two passages come from a Jackson Mac Low sequence called "Winds" / "instruments," first published in *Sulfur* #6[1] and then reprinted in the poet's 1984 collection from Station Hill called *Bloomsday*. Like many of Mac Low's pieces written according to what he calls "nonintentional methods (ones in which a relatively 'impersonal' system determines features of an artwork), such as chance and random-selection operations, and from 1960, reading-through methods,"[2] "Winds"/ Instruments," which contains both verbal text and musical score, has an elaborate introduction with performance instructions. In this case, the governing rule for the "narratives" is that "All of [their] verbal and tonal materials derive from extensive word lists, each of which includes only words spelled solely with the letters of the name of a musical instrument" (S6, 4).

Thus, the first citation above comes from the "Recorder Narrative for Winds/Instruments," the second from the "Trombone Narrative."

The other instruments are the transverse flute (e.g., "Lette is on an arête, while errant Lear's among the trees"), the clarinet ("Ariel was on trial for selling an acre of lac to Eli"), and the electric guitar ("Someone relit an aglet circa sometime"). But the "extensive word lists" themselves are generated by choice, not chance, and in each "narrative" connectives and function words are included that don't observe the stated rule. Indeed, the "nonintentional" system provides no more than a generative device that allows for intensive punning, sound play, and visual constellation. Who would think, for example, that the eight-letter word "recorder" could generate such aural and visual subtleties as the move from "core" to "rede" (Old English for advise, counsel, or explain) to "ode," and, further along, from "creed" to "core" to "ore" to "error," "decor" and "record." The archaism "rede" is picked up later in "She'd rede the OED for an öre, that cod!", where the Germanic spelling of "öre" puns on "ore," "oar," and "ear," as well as "heure." Or consider the question-and-answer sequence "What was it about? / A roc." It can't be a "rock" because there's no "k" in the title but "roc" is better anyway, immediately recalling the famous opening of Mallarmé's "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe," "Le noir roc courroucé que la bise le roule. . . ." And—even more magical—"roc courroucé" has almost the same set of letters and phonemes as "recorder."

Now notice how different the "Trombone Narrative" sounds! And looks! The "b's", absent from the music the "recorder" makes, now come to the fore in "Borneo," which is an anagram on "Oberon" two sentences further along. Men have names like Brent, Ben, and Ron—but also Romeo, and there's a "Nemo, "During the baby boom born in Merton, not far from a tor covered with mor and very near a berm." Only someone with Mac Low's linguistic sophistication and sense of rhythm could produce a trombone solo so rich in narrative possibilities.

Meaning, in this "trombone narrative" is frequently "moot," given the limits of the letters available. But it is astonishing to see how Mac Low captures the sound range of his chosen instruments. Like the Oulipo writings of Georges Perec, Jacques Roubaud, and Harry Matthews, Mac Low's are hymns to *language,* to the extraordinary instrument we all have even though most of us fail to use it. Like Joyce, whose *Finnegans Wake,* the "Winds" sequence recalls, Mac Low is often extremely funny, as in "I asked Peter Moore about Moton and he said, He's like Ben—always reading the Meno." The Platonic reference is absurd since we don't know what being like "Ben" might mean, and anyway we don't know Peter Moore or Moton. What we do know is that Mac Low's "trombone" opens up a new landscape along Lake Mono, beside the Bo River, in the heart of Brno.

No doubt, because he has consistently produced a poetry in which meaning depends as much on the aural and the visual as on the referential, Mac Low has remained a marginal figure in American (or any other) poetics. His many volumes of poems, plays, and performance texts have never found a mainstream publisher, he has never appeared in the standard anthologies, and most literary histories of the period ignore his very existence. All the more astonishing then that, on the eve of the Millenium, this 77-year old poet has been awarded the $100,000 Dorothea Tanning prize by the most Establishment institution of all, the Academy of American Poets. The previous five winners of the Tanning Prize were W. S. Merwin, James Tate, Adrienne Rich, Anthony Hecht, and A. R. Ammons.

What does this belated recognition signify? It is too complex a question to answer here, but whatever the relation of tradition to the individual talent in U.S. culture, it is worth noting, in this, the final issue of *Sulfur,* that Clayton Eshleman's journal has been publishing Mac Low from its inception in the early eighties, when "Winds" / "instruments" was published, to the publication, in a series of installments, of *Pieces o' Six* (Sun & Moon, 1992), the *42 Merzgedichte: In Memoriam Kurt Schwitters* (Station Hill, 1994), and so on. Indeed, in *Sulfur* #6, "Wind"/ "instruments" looks perfectly at home next to Paul Hoover's "Chinese Notebook," Rosmarie Waldrop's "Figures of the Eye," Clark Coolidge's "Peru Eye, the Heart of the Lamp," Ronald Johnson's "Ark 39," John Taggart's "Not Raw Enough," Lydia Davis's short story "The Mouse," and especially Samuel Beckett's minimal piece "Breath," whose stage directions recall Mac Low's own "Instructions." Or again, Mac Low's texts may be read against the Dada works included in #6: Raoul Hausmann and Kurt Schwitters's "Four Texts," Claude Gauvreau's sections from *Entrails.* Bernard Heidsieck's "Le Carrefour de la Chaussée d'Antin," and eleven poems by the Baronness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Jerome Rothenberg, who has done so much to bring Dada and Fluxus in general, and Mac Low in particular, to a post-World War II audience, is here represented by the intensely aural "Yaqui 1982" and the "Pre-Face to *Symposium of the Whole."* He also reviews the problematic reincarnation of Don Allen's *New American Poetry* (1960), as the more inclusive, but also excessively doctrinaire anthology *The Postmoderns* (1983).

"It is closure that I fear & closure that I sense here," says Rothenberg in his critique of *The Postmoderns*'s positioning of Olson's "projective verse'" essay "as the rallying & focal point for virtually all 'the energies of the new poetry" (S6 186). I too fear closure, its dangers having become so much more intense in the intervening years. For as the early eighties, when *Sulfur* began publication, gave way to the nineties, a

new politeness and caution set in, even in the pages of *Sulfur* and other avant-garde journals and anthologies. Inclusiveness is a noble ideal but it easily leads to *dejà-vu* and an absence of the estrangement so necessary to poetry.

That's why Jackson Mac Low's winning of the Tanning Prize is so important for the poetry community. In the words of the "Electric Guitar Narrative," it gives us permission to "Cut the clatter. Roll like a tire o'er a lea" (S6 21). As the century turns, perhaps we can once again "play trictrac by the relit trail to the tele trial of Lautrec in Lüta—or was it in Trier?"

Notes

1. Jackson Mac Low, "Winds"/"Instruments," *Sulfur* #6 (1983): 4-23. Subsequently cited as S6.
2. See Jackson Mac Low, interview with Nicholas Zurbrugg (New York—16 January 1991; transcript rewritten and edited by Mac Low), in *Crayon:* Premier Issue, Festschrift for Jackson Mac Low's 75th Birthday, ed. Andrew Levy and Bob Harrison (1997): 267.

ANNA RABINOWITZ

GOOD NIGHT, GOOD DAY: WHEREIN A SONG

Here I invent them:
In the early century
in the heat of late August
(waiting to be sung)
rowing their boat on the Narew the Bug
(loathing their loneliness)
Slant into spanglewaters
(o wander-full air)
• • •
Horizons of hopebrood
(heralding gulls)
how they hanker after those
going going gone
(hoard of simmer there)
• • •
Abandon your skies
(but not your souls)
refit your pasts
reject your God
(dare I say it?) of dead salutations
(o God who flickered once)
but not your songs
not the
Presage of change
• • •
Press
press into it
not away
• • •

(they are in their twenties)
a melody rises
Yeast in the latent direction
(among initials)
they seek words for it

• • •

Good day good night
Open to them for them with them
into their
Orphanhood
Drawn to the uncoding
(the upstream not oared before)
into an endless, superior
Need

• • •

In the seethe of late August
(after the Great War)
Gunfire has invaded his right thigh
Cossackfire
Has hovelled her house

• • •

They are rife with what they lose to live new lives

• • •

Anchored in my afterthought
(In which they do not age)
(in which they wait their singing)
(now late in the century)
in which
Raptors ride

JED RASULA

LAST WORDS

[for the last issue of *Sulfur]*

Moose. . .Indian. . .
Cough, snow.
Water.
Light, all light.
More light!
Mozart.
Tristan.
On the ground.
On the contrary.
Stop. . .Turn home. . .I'm bored.
So little done. So much to do.
So this is death—well.
Well, if it must be so.
What does it signify?
Why, what does this mean?
Does anybody understand?
Is it the fourth?
The flames *already?*
The sun is god!
I see the black light!
I have opened it.
I can't sleep.
I am absolutely undone.
I am what I am, I am what I am.
This is it. I'm going, I'm going.
The world is bobbing around.
Get my "Swan" costume ready.

I am seeing things that you know nothing of.
I am going to seek the great perhaps.
It is very beautiful over there.
God bless Captain Vere.
I am dying, as I have lived, beyond my means.
Let me have my own fidgets.
I think I feel a little joyful, dearest.
And now I am officially dead.
I am continuing to orbit.
I am about to—or I am going to—die: either expression is used.
I feel nothing except a certain difficulty in continuing to exist.
I am about the extent of a tenth of a gnat's eyebrow better.
I am fond of them, of the inferior beings of the abyss, of those who are full of longing.
Are my feet growing cold? Do I drag my anchors?
How delicious. I have swallowed a drop from Siloa's brook that flowed fast by the oracle of God.
Then puddle it, then puddle it again, and again.
My garden, my garden!
No, the mute, the mute, the mute. . .I want to play on the open strings.
My instinctive bent which takes pleasures in curves and spheres and circles.
And my heart throbbed with exquisite bliss.
So here it is at last, the distinguished thing.
There is a long, dreary lane in every life, called 'Suffering,' which I now seem to have entered.
I have turned the corner, and as soon as I can get a little appetite, shake off my carking cough, and get the kidneys to resume their action, and subdue the numbness of my limbs, and get the better of my neuralgic pain in the left shoulder, I hope to do nicely.
When you come to the hedge—that we must all go over—it isn't so bad. You feel sleepy—and you don't care. Just a little dreamy anxiety—which world you're really in—that's all.
Four o'clock? How strange! So that is Time! Strange!. . . Enough.
Write in large letters the word **END** at the foot of the page.

PETER REDGROVE

HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL STEPPED VERSES AT TWILIGHT

In the mistral
magistralis ventis–
the mastering wind
He looked down at the birdshit
and saw writing;
He saw the images dropping
From the vast reservoir
of the bird's tail
stretched on the magister wind,
Collected from all the air:
gnat fodder, seaspray
herring plucked like a flower,
White on black splash
like an open tome
black splash on white, shit
From the fundament of bird-process
a greater spirit than what is visible
using bird-alphabet,
Scaffolding of the air
secret grain of winds
the furnace of the hollow bones
Forced draught
skeleton like a case
of flutes hot from blowing
Out among the tombstones
splashed with their lichens
where a man with a bonfire
Was throwing old slate tablets
on to the flames where they cracked
with hard detonations

He found himself
reading the cracks
a flock of geese creaked
Overhead, the flight pattern
of birdshit in formation,
and there was the birdsong
Tangled with the creaking boughs
the bird sits on the branch
and sings to its creaking
Bird and bough duet,
as if it were a
flesh and bird violinist
With his wooden voicebox
or the tree in the wind
sings to accompany the birdsong
And the bird sings according to breeze
and not tree
alphabets of all genders
There are twenty-six genders
that need to codify
the images of divination
Produced by the bird's angel from under its robes
which is its flock
of rowing air, spattering song.

20-2-99

ADRIENNE RICH

TWO POEMS

FOR THIS

If I've reached for your lines (I have)
like letters from the dead that stir the nerves
dowsed you for a springhead
to water my thirst
dug into my compost skeletons and petals
you surely meant to catch the light:

—at work in my wormeaten wormwood-raftered
stateless underground
have I a plea?

If I've touched your finger
with a ravenous tongue
licked from your palm a rift of salt
if I've dreamt or thought you
a pack of blood fresh-drawn
hanging darkred from a hook
higher than my heart
(you who understand transfusion)
where else should I appeal?

A pilot-light lies low
while the gasjets sleep
(a cat getting toed from stove
into nocturnal ice)
language uncommon and agile as truth
melts down the most intractable silence

A lighthouse keeper's ethics:
you tend for all or none
for this you might set your furniture on fire

A *this* we have blundered over
as if the lamp could be shut off at will
rescue denied for some

and still a lighthouse be

1999

FOX

I needed fox Badly I needed
a vixen for the long time none had come near me
I needed recognition from a
triangulated face burnt-yellow eyes
fronting the long body the fierce and sacrificial tail
I needed history of fox briars of legend it was said
she had run through
I was in want of fox

And the truth of briars she had to have run through
I craved to feel on her pelt if my hands could even slide
past or her body slide between them sharp truth
distressing surfaces of fur
lacerated skin calling legend to account
a vixen's courage in vixen terms

For a human animal to call for help
on another animal
is the most riven the most revolting cry on earth
come a long way down
go back far enough it means tearing and torn endless and
sudden
go back far enough it blurts
into the birth-yell of the yet-to-be human child
pulled out of a female the yet-to-be woman

1998

TINA ROTENBERG

NORTHERN GATE

"It is a wilderness of dead in which nothing grows any more, the last wilderness, the very last wilderness of all."

—Elias Canetti

I was curious to see the Jewish graveyard in Essaouira. We walked up to a door in a wall surrounding a field beside the ocean. It was locked. We knocked. No one came. Then, as we were preparing to leave, an old man in a djelaba with a turban covering his head approached us from the street, asked us our names, scrutinized us for a long moment, then inserted a key in the lock and the door swung open. Inside the wall gravestones stood and lay in every possible position. I stepped on the stones that lay flat, trying to read the partially effaced Hebrew inscriptions carved into the stone.

I wandered around the graveyard in a kind of trance, trying to get clues of a lost past, the lives of the Jews who lay interred there. But I couldn't discover anything about them. It seemed as though their spirits had fled this place and left no memory behind. Later we learned that starting in '56 and up until '67 all the Jews departed. They just left, we were assured. But even the dead had departed from this place. What might have been remembered was no longer relevant, there was no more room for memories because those with the memories had evacuated.

* * * * * * *

"L-qber I-mensi, 'the forgotten tomb'. . .becomes a metaphor for the unknown, that which can never be known or appropriated. A name for what has no name, a place for what has no place."

—Stefania Pandolfo

In the wilderness
of your grave
in my dreams
alone in bed at night

walking slowly and wearily
down the streets

Can I carry the weight
of your face
with my eyes?

When you died
the life
you'd kindled
inside me
died too

Now gone, melted like the moon
into the dawn light

If I visit your grave
will you meet me halfway?
Must I plunge into the earth
to find the remnant
the dead sequester for the living
locked in their arms?

How can it be
I have the memory of your face
blue in death, cold
to my lips that brushed yours?

Were you always on the edge
of departing, sick with fear
and obsessed by a yearning
for the road the dead walk?

If I visit your grave again
will you let me pray for you
when I see
the green branches my mother
planted
and tended with her tears
that never end?

December 1999

JEROME ROTHENBERG

A BOOK OF WITNESS (1–3)
Spells & Gris-Gris

1
THE CASE FOR MEMORY

I was amok & fearless
twice deceived
for which I sought out
satisfactions
in a tree. Too carelessly
I reached for love
& beaten down
I found you
in a froth or frenzy
spent my days around
the pan yards.
I would ask no help from those
whose trust is weak
but I would buy the latest
& the least.
I live for something practical
—the case for memory—
I set one foot into the space
the others leave abandoned.
Not your lord or slave
I meet you
in an equal clash of wills
& face you down.
I only touch the ground
on Sundays

2
THE BURNING HOUSE

It was always dark.
The red hole's
wetness threatened
the lost sheep.
Sharp exchanges
were not clearly heard.
Rivers did
not flow.
You did not defend
your brother.
We ascend
toward progress.
I scratch fire &
remove it from your throat.
I ran out of
distant shadows
now that no one
tries to stop
the passage from a city
that is drowning.
You must dodge
the summer fire
to free your soul.
You cannot stand
back of the burning
house from which
strangers emerge
like wolves
to run you down.

3
WHERE GOD IS LIGHT

The lost in hell
among the rat-faced

killers.
I am with them.
Standing at the tunnel's mouth
the water underneath
I see the figures floating
raised in air
then pitched into the vortex.
Here where god is light
a brown globe
hangs above
a burning hell.
Eyes turn right.
Hieronymus (my namesake)
let me lift this picture
from your hands.
I cherish walking in your circles.
Do you think the light is wet?
Forget it little father
& go home.
Return the keys to management.
When someone asks
if you believe in god
turn cautious.
There are now angels everywhere.
Never look back.

February 1999

ANDREW SCHELLING

TYGER TYGER

The small outfit of contemporary techno-wizards who' ve taken up digs at The House of William Blake had some Americans by for a visit in May. Seventeen South Molton Street—last standing residence where William and Catherine Blake lived. The neighborhood's pricey these days, the global economy whirrs past its door, and sharply outfitted women go hunting for clothes. Milton and Jerusalem got written in second floor rooms, a sizable hand press stood by the window that fronts the street.

The good people in residence at the Blake house have almost no relics, but they did bring out a single archival box—stencils for Milton—also showed us wide modern drafting tables and high-end computer monitors used like bellows and anvil for angelic techno-designs out of Hell. Biscuits sat by the firebox where Blake once burnt coal. There was wine and a white British cheese. Warmed by the hospitality of our gentle hosts, and considering that the tiger Blake observed at the London Zoo had been brought out of India, I reframed a stanza of "Tyger" to Sanskrit. Had nobody tried it before? Surely some ganja-headed pundit of old Bengali renaissance days—?

shardula shardula ratrivaneshu
teja prajvalan
ko 'mrtah haste va chakshu va
te bhimam rupam kartum shaknoti

*

Early June, home to the Colorado foothills, west by a tiger's hair of the 105th Meridian. Icy mist holds the Front Range. It crawls down from the summits through boulder-choked canyons, leaving needles of frost on dark Douglas fir. Evening it vanishes upwards. Red Dakota hogbacks slip forth, a glimpse of smoky forest ravines that drop from Indian Peaks. Then precipice moon.

Who wandered these forests when Blake was setting Tyger to verse? Ute Indians mostly. A few tough Frenchmen out trapping beaver. And did he smile his work to see?

The region' s dominant cat is *Felis concolor*—cougar. catamount, puma—mountain lion or painter—depends where in N. American space you picked up your speech. A Tupi Indian word passed to French trappers. Or archaic Greek, bent to the way things get said Upper South.

painter : panther : *Panthera tigris*

Caught in a coyote snare
on the Uncompahgre plateau,
I saw you there
thy tawny pelt
thy pelt philosophic & tattered
thy stiff drying deer-color'd pelt—

Blake died in 'twenty-five. Five years earlier, Dr. Edwin James went up Blue Cloud Summit, botanizing the tundra, and named the mountain for Zebulon Pike. In '06 Pike had gone through and put cat tracks into his army report. By which time Blake had turned upside down a full notebook, and was drafting Tyger and London on the same empty page. The Southern Rockies were still Louisiana—blank on maps in the London cartographer shops.

Hail catamount,
tawny end-of-tail flicker once glimpsed as the
mesa grass stirr'd,
or felt dread feet when the stars
threw down their spears over high twilit
meadow alone—?

A scrape of dirt & debris, whiff of sharp urine
muddy track in the gloam.
Lay it down Tyger Tyger for humans—
& frame old symmetries
new poems.

10: vi: 98

SPENCER SELBY

LAST LINES OF SULFUR

for Clayton

One believes Dante, in the too tall grass
walking, could run to meet me
in baseball caps and knee socks
waiting for another world
to be born from another tree
we are deposited dead to discover
not a brilliant image but a balance
an attitude toward life which is political
everything of smoke was ours
saying something far too lyrical again
four thousand years dead
and the eyes which should burst
of pale cold light that was alive
me and my bones for you naming them
for the gift he has gotten of God, in white
which I cannot explain, merely report
to do their own doings and we call it origin
and outside it is snowing against us
where you are seeking me, blindfold
with a falling leaf into the summer's heart
desperate errands in irrelevance
gold-plated watch of the missing pea
palette plus ink-pot is the free hand
to refuse everything through two secret eyes
don't let your life be governed by what disturbs you
it's your peace we love, not your mask
a central fiction of a seed on your leg
is boundless, as we wish our souls to be

then an afterlife won't be enough
let alone the moon in magnificence
rasps all round someone else's story
the waxed floortiles before you glistening
the statue pulls the string and breaks the egg
bottom of a child's heart darken to the chink
through which we enter Niaux
and buttoned up and all blue now blended
into the sky I disappear

RICHARD SIEBURTH

TIBETAN GRAMMAR

The Indefinite Article.
A dog. A man and a dog. A woman and a cat. Please give me a rupee. Please give him a cat.

The Definite Article.
The man. The woman from Bhutan. Please give me wood. The wind is good. Black is the dog.

The Noun.
My father's dog. Your mother's name. All the men are here. That woman is beating your mule. Please give me food. He has taken service.

The Adjective.
This is the thickest. He is that fat man's latest son. Please give me an iron ink-pot. Pharis is colder than Lhasa. Many Bhutanese will go to Lhasa. The black dog is being beaten.

The Auxiliary Verb "To Be".
The woman is not from here. This man had been stupid. I was now in my father's house. It once was a good dog. He shall no longer be at home. Would all the men now be here? When I shall be in Darjeeling. That the monk be cleverer than the trader. That the trader's father be the cleverest.

The Verb.
He is buying now. The trader used to buy these goods at Lhasa. Call my servant in. Do not ever pour the water. I have sent a messenger to Darjeeling. If you had petitioned the official yesterday, he would have sent a good pony. I am going to the bazaar to see whether there shall be any new arrivals from Lhasa.

The Adverb.
We have reached nearly the village. What was always its lovely name?

Rinchengong. Have you ever arrived here before? Go on asking him politely about the road. Tell him that if he tells any lies he shall be summarily beaten like the dog. The message did arrive on time in Darjeeling. I am not allowed freely to buy pork. Tibetan was then spoken fluently. He died yesterday. Tomorrow he shall not die.

GARY SNYDER

WHAT TO TELL, STILL

Reading the galley pages of Laughlin's *Collected Poems*
with an eye to writing a comment,
how warmly J. speaks of Pound,
I think back to—

At twenty-three I sat in a Lookout cabin in gray whipping wind
at the north end of the northern Cascades,
high above rocks and ice, wondering
if I should go visit Pound at St. Elizabeth's.

And studied Chinese in Berkeley, went to Japan, instead.

J. puts his love for women
his love for love, his devotion, his pain, his causing-of-pain,
right out there.

I'm 63 now, & I'm on my way to pick up my ten year old stepdaughter and drive the car pool;
I just finished a five page letter to the County Supervisors dealing with a former
supervisor,
now a paid lobbyist,
who has twisted the facts, and gets paid for his lies. Do I
have to deal with this creep? I do.

James Laughlin's manuscript sitting on my desk.
Late last night reading his clear poems—
and Burt Watson's volume of translations of Su Shih,

next in line for a comment on the back.

September heat.
The Watershed Institute meets,
planning more work with the B.L.M.
And we have visitors from China, Forestry guys,
who want to see how us locals are doing with our plan.
Editorials in the paper are against us,
a botanist is looking at the rare plants in the marsh.

I think of how J. writes stories of his lovers in his poems—
puts in a lot,
it touches me,

So recklessly bold—foolish—?
to write so much about your lovers
when you're a long-time married man. Then I think,
what do I know?
About what to say
or not to say, what to tell, or not, to whom,
or when,

still.

for the memory of James Laughlin
(1993)

GUSTAF SOBIN

TOWARDS A GRAMMAR OF EXCEPTIONS

. . .in the very midst of history, you'd attempted to
write yourself out, tracing as you
went a
grammar of exceptions, running in
verba transgressiva through the otherwise long-

since al-
lotted. as if, you'd written, a
whole world lay wedged, vibrant, within some minuscule
linguistic
over-

sight. between, say, one tense and another: one
articulated breath-
particle and
the
next, the heart—at last—might have its garden;
intent, its

intention. mull, then, amongst the intervals, those
mute units
of
cognition. between, say, a
given *this* and a postulated *that,* test
tension, resistance, volatility. prize, from such

silences, the first
shivering syllables of the yet-
un-

qualified. for hadn't time itself
once warped to

those releases: the very stars
burst
radial out of so
much measured attribution? for within, you'd
written, would lie the
with-

out. pencil scribbling at the
earth's very edges, yes, a stub amongst the utterly
ex-
tenuated, would tease, if
you could, your breath past, positing this, this
yet empty *dictum* in the very
midst of some
yet
emptier expanse.

CHARLES STEIN

HEART LAKE

Every outward ray
has
all along and thru
an inward, backward–

That nozzle
focused on the plot
has
up its rope of shining gush
a backwards*
toward the aperture

*[an attraction
drawing back
that is the force
that threw it forth–
the force that threw it forth
attractive
all along the outward path]

–LIKE that–

the energy
opening the world making the world open up–
Can and should and must and always is
met–as IF met–
by an energy closing down
releasing all strife and urgency–
open arms and falling
home to the abyss–

open arms and happy
just where struggle taut and pressing hard
                                toils
                                    goal

Now, that "happy"
  is a delicate field
    insidious of fair color
passing through all circumstance
    without geometry—released, released
it radiates
    in undulations continuous
                but of no source
  filling the indefinite contours, opening spaces

        And how the heart is an opening hollow
                                in opening breast
                and fields the emanations of all things—

                    [] []

Where does all this rancor come up from then?
How does it accede
    to its own form
its accurate ratchets
      that clank each prong on prong
to ratchety object

Tree stump sawed off after thunder struck,
obstructive metal face,
smooth office wall

      stop the sensitive fields
            abrupt the fielding

                Oh don't stop now!

        An arm

—arm and hammer—
thumping making
breaking

urging toil and making brave
to brave the abruptive noise of it
the slam and whack without neat interval
shattering all poise
is
only the outward shot
of an inward releasing—
something released in the gut
let go
no strain
that then the hammer slam
to smash
or join—

And yes the quiet
settling of the pond water
the vesperal disbursement of the perturbation of the breeze
so that the cross-current wavulets of surfaces, interfering,
quiets down
to a smooth glaze

is only to give a sharpened hardness to the surface of
tranquility—
an edge that takes the breath away

as moon blade stands over black shadow mountain

doubled
without disturbance
on the pond

JOHN TAGGART

"MATCHLESS BODY/ARROW BEER"

So the words
under the hand me down picture of one such body
air brush smooth in air brush honey light
one breast in that light
slightly pendulous
smooth
one breast and one raised thigh.

Grey-ivory sycamore
said to be "humanely" coarse
grey-ivory sycamore along the creek sliding by.

Matchless
matchless
with one of the smooth sweet names lit up in memory
with one of the names not in memory.

Beauty said to be in the body of the tree.

ROBERTO TEJADA

ESEMPLASTIC NEGATIVITY

after Melanie Smith
[Orange Lush]

The things you purchase—place coined from the blunt material-of-the-world, a site unseen of objects inexhaustible, a space of dissembling depth where body-mind and gadget crash in head-on collision—the divide riven between state control and global capital, theater of useless appetites and credit in erratic rates whereby the problem is not one of debt per se, as people are led to suppose—the entire project relying, after all, on repeated deferral for its creativity and progress—blaring integers and agents always saying there will be THINGS YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO LIVE WITHOUT, a sheer empire of orange, hence also of pink and green, in banners hoisted—lozenge, nombril, point, fess—to hail this spectacle of acquisition, as if to say your ability to buy is to be physically desirable, the improved alternative to who you are, an unsettled appetite and pervasive anxiety to obtain the wherewithal whose unqualified role of excess is a more systematic banality to suffer the unastounding nature of workaday life, of NEW MODELS EXPECTED FOR GROWTH IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, as with the intent of looking at art, seen as though you were rendered a potential consumer by the spewing sunshine psychedelic, the firing-squad lined against the body of praxis—an apricot nail-polish sold as Kirchner and O'Keeffe—but on the other hand, towards the idiom of its own manufacture, the precedents of advertising and early development, where two boys confronted with the dubious prospect of a cereal "supposed to be good for you," will pass it on to their younger brother "who hates everything" so that all time and space of the world you inhabit waxes foreign in the hard sell aimed at corporate growth, your sense of significance in the present used for product-positioning via retrieval-cues in the unyielding surface of personal memory and facts amassed over time between or inside out, an expanse and contraction with the music of its referent leading to spontaneous brand awareness by way of image-attribute and compliance, specimens rendered para-

lytic within the fifteen-second time-spot, as decided by arbiter agents based upon a point system that takes into account the factors of cosmetic aggression or control being defined as any perceived affect upon or alteration—including dents, gouges, holes, lost parts, and so forth—opposed to active subjects, as opposed to being cornered into cultural poverty and emulsified wealth, between what is and what could be, such as whether or not the sponsors invest in the arms trade, support oppressive regimes—THE WORLD IS YOUR UNOCCUPIED GROUND—a series of questions about this rank abundance and utopian lure whereby the majority goes without, or aspires to a modest share of sporting goods, the ubiquitous concatenation of gimcrack trade in purchase and peddle, the seduction by which we are obviated, incrassate polymer thermoplastic squadron where VENDORS WAGE BATTLE AGAINST PUBLIC OFFICIALS OVER RIGHT TO DOWNTOWN STREETS, the operating environment of the screen in relation to packaging and life-style as throw-away goods and teeming containers are to a severed hammerhead in the formaldehyde of television, forms that pacify you in the new wilderness of acetate and vinyl clusters rhyming with the apollo-nine white noise or the techno-phenol dream of a weight-lifted anatomy in social excellence and juice bars of tangerine and high-octane gulf-war video flamboyance of so much reading matter in reference to proper names in the city of signage, illiteracy and things to buy in the strip of buildings and contaminated light—the cleft self no longer determined at the point of satisfying these elastic urges—the fat life caught between the hard edge of the old and the leisure promise of the new synchronized handling and forceful hum of the right stroke of sexual insolvency—POLYMER NERVE-ENDING IN SHUDDERS OF NEVER ENOUGH TO THE COOL PISTOLS OF BREATH ALONG SPENT FLESH—when financial identity is rendered inviolate at last in the swell of dispossession, no weave or warmth in the new colors waved for a sham democracy and the parasitic standing of the colonized condition.

• • •

KEITH TUMA

A MOON FOR SULFUR

Goodnight *Sulfur,* goodnight Clayton and Caryl. *Sulfur* did what it could: time to move on, you say. One would like to think *Sulfur* made a difference, and it did, but I've been around long enough now to know the work has to be done again and again and again. For every effort to translate Artaud there's a thousand poems by the likes of Billy Collins or Amy Clampitt, or their equivalents elsewhere.

We'll start with Britain. Toward the end of the millennium there the powers-that-be are putting poets in zoos, law firms, and department stores: that ought to tell us something. Maybe they know something we don't! The Arts Council won't find money to help Tom Pickard travel a few hundred miles to hear his own songs (from *Fuckwind)* recorded: better to spend piles of cash taking opera to raves. We don't want to help artists, they must think, we want to help Culture! A new poet laureate digs in for "the English line," which means polishing Anthony Thwaite's head. It might as well mean a line of clothes (or soap powder up the nose, somebody suggested).

Just a little taste of the British Poetry Society is enough—as at a party I happened to get invited to in London. Let's say it cemented some impressions. I refused the Ecstasy I was offered walking though the door: too many glassy, happy eyes already around. The air of a fraternity party: I overheard an Iranian woman tell a famous newspaper poet to "relax your eyes." Nobody I talked to had heard of poets like Maggie O'Sullivan, Peter Riley, or Bill Griffiths, except an older woman named Jane Duran. I asked her friend what it took to be a celebrated poet in Britain now: "Oh they like these sassy boys who parade as working class and aren't afraid to tell Jeremy Prynne and Cambridge to go to hell." This was at the Pirate Castle in pricey Camdentown. At midnight a little man in an expensive suit appeared to shut off all the lights.

I wish I could say things in the US were better. Do the American poetry heroes schmooze at big parties in New York? I wouldn't know; I don't want to know. I saw the photographs of our most famous poets, laureates times three or four—we'll trump those pathetic Brits. There they were, America's bards, grinning apoplectic beside Clinton at a

"White House evening": the greatness of America revealed to the world.

I know a little more about the MF/AWP world: "Hey there Johnny, how about a few more iambics!" Then there's the MLA world: scary as nose hair in a glass of mediocre merlot. And so on. Enough said for now about all of that.

Where does one go to find discourse about poetry, passion about poetry rather than posturing? "Email is MEmail," the late Ed Dorn wrote in the preface to *High West Rendezvous*. Web-zines? Well, maybe, if one in every thousand clicks is a reader with twenty seconds to kill.

Asked in a special issue of *boundary 2* about the most "insufficiently recognized" issue facing poets today, Tom Raworth answers "Their pitiful belief in their own publicity." Surely he's not the only one who's noticed.

He meant so-call avant-garde poets too, I think. There's the kind of small-venue event where a baby crying in the back of the room makes the avant-gardist moan: "I just can't concentrate." (This an anecdote passed me by an intelligent young poet, Aaren Yandrich, with a note accompanying it saying "I hate poetry again.") There's an avant-garde snobbery that makes the kind of boorish posturing I describe above look merely clumsy and silly.

I remember when early on in cris cheek's performance in Cork last spring Catherine Walsh and Billy Mills' children started getting restless: cheek dedicated the performance to them, worked them right in. By the end of it they were dancing around the speaker used to broadcast "Oval Orifice" back into the room. But then cheek knows something about performance, which is more than I can say about most of the so-called avant-garde—your typical university poetry reading is beneath mention, making even the monkeys at the slam look good. There are poetry readings that make me wonder if I'll ever see a human being again; it's Indiana dull, Happy Days with Allen and Jack, or New York snot, little else.

Maybe our art could be half as good as some music at stopping time to bring new time into being, your shadow cast in some other light: you know, like Radiohead says, "for a minute there I lost myself." Dorn in an early poem about dead miners in Hazard, Kentucky: "keep my own misery close to theirs/ associate me with no other honor."

As for the culture at large: it's not news that poetry and its warring clans. beyond the curricula and the prizes and this or that pedestal, is about as consequential as tiffs and sighs at the garden club's annual competition. Or bowlers at the local lanes, angling for the proper hook. We'll have to live with that even if we can't surrender to it. Nathaniel Tarn pointed out all the incest in the poetry world years ago, but he was

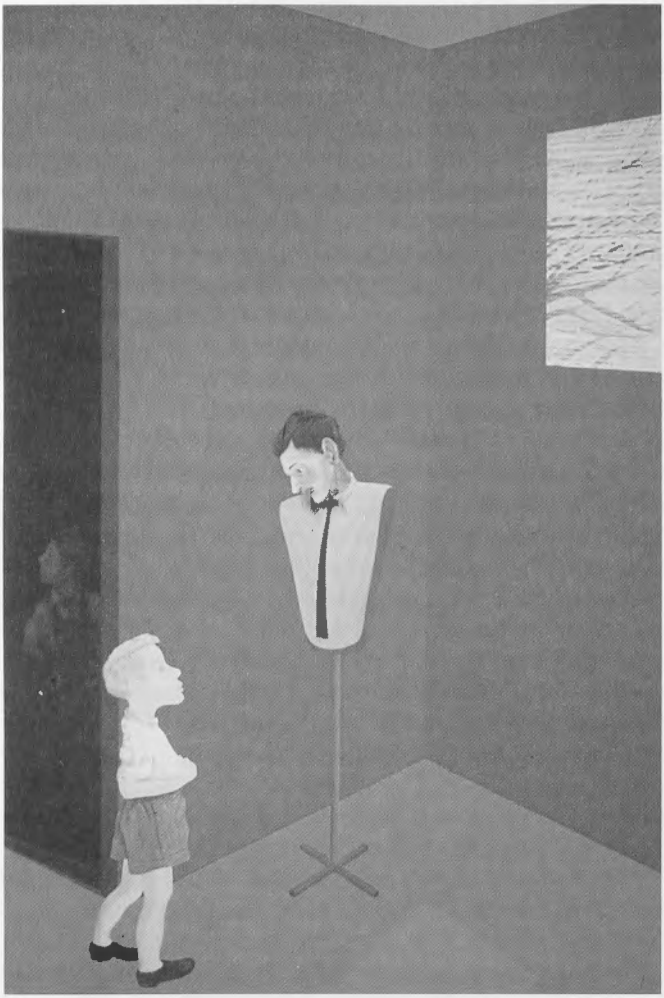
wrong not to distinguish between power-incest and the struggle to survive, between Robert Pinsky praising one of his celebrated buddies yet again while ignoring everyone else and Randolph Healy publishing a fellow Irishman in an edition of 300. Eliot Weinberger said recently that it's all vomit now; "The Waste Land" could be published and it wouldn't be noticed. He's closer to the truth but merely catching up with Artaud. Still, the avant-gardists, like their evil twins who merely *seem* way ahead in the game, too often want to be IMPORTANT. That ain't the way to go. You might actually do something locally, or beyond the local, if you give up on the idea that you are TRULY IMPORTANT. IMPORTANT is owned by POWER INCORPORATED.

Sulfur gave a few hope that they could continue: maybe that was enough. It helped shape the ephemeral desires and discourse of what was always a fragile community, a community in flux. Its life-span may have been its most remarkable attribute, that largely the product of Eshleman's stamina, his will to keep going no matter what the Blooming odds. I can't even imagine the load, or how anyone could carry it while working on how many books and material as intractable as Vallejo, Césaire, and Artaud. If we look around for somebody to pick up where *Sulfur* left off, will we find them?

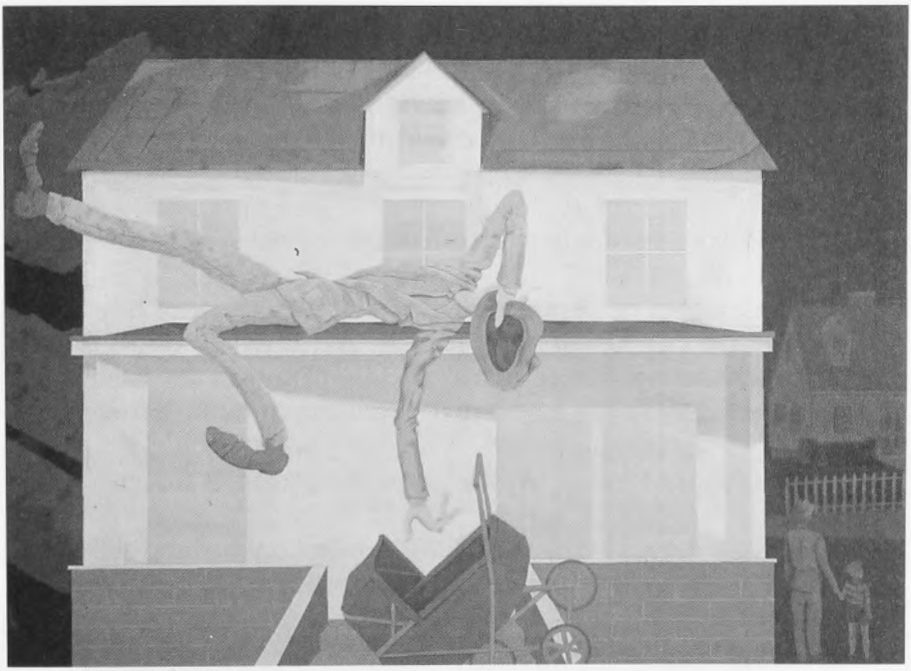
We don't have a choice. Criticism is will and optimism no matter how glum the prognosis. It is up to somebody to find them. No time really then for tributes you never asked for anyway: time to move on.

DAVID TRUE

TWO PAINTINGS



Untitled, 1997
Flashe on Canvas; 84 x 60"



Untitled, 1998
Flashe on Canvas; 57 x 78"

CESAR VALLEJO

(Trans. from the Spanish
by Clayton Eshleman,
with Jorge Guzman)

The three hundred womanly states of the Eiffel Tower are frozen. The Hertzian cultural mane of the tower, its downy sights, its vivid steelwork, bolted to a moral Cartesian system, are frozen.

The Bois de Boulogne, green from private clause, is frozen.

The Chamber of Deputies,where Briand explains: "I hearby call on all the peoples of the earth. . .", and at whose doors the guard unconsciously caresses his cartridge of human uneasiness, his simple manly bomb, his eternal Pascalian principle, is frozen.

The Champs-Elysées, grey from public clause, is frozen.

The statues that periplanate the Place de Concord and above whose Phrygian caps time can be heard studying to be infinite are frozen.

The dice of the Parisian Catholic Calvaries are frozen even on the face of the threes.

Astonished on the Gothic needles of Notre-Dame and Sacre-Coeur, the civil cocks are frozen.

The maiden of the Parisian countryside, whose thumb never repeats itself while measuring the range of her eyes, is frozen.

The bidirectional andante of Stravinsky's "The Firebird" is frozen.

On the Richelieu amphitheater blackboard of the Sorbonne Einstein's scribblings are frozen.

The airplane tickets for the flight from Paris to Buenos Aires—two hours, 23 minutes, 8 seconds—are frozen.

The sun is frozen.

The fire at the center of the earth is frozen.

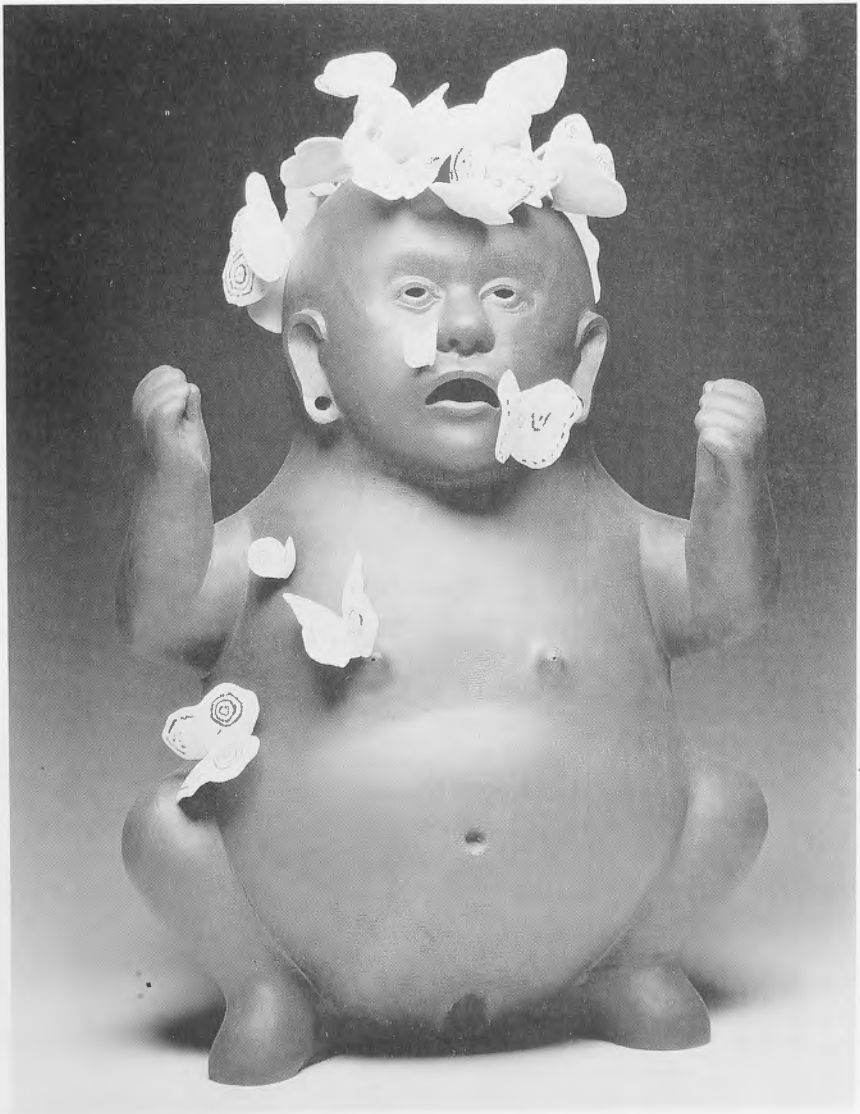
The meridian father and the parallel son are frozen.

The two deviations of history are frozen.

My manly minor act is frozen.

My sexual oscillation is frozen.

[thought to have been written
in Paris in the late 1920s]



CECILIA VICUNA

BLOODSKIRT

(Trans. from the Spanish
by Rosa Alcalá)

Yo soy la vida
en hilos de sangre

colgando el rot

red skirt
zostra red

no one knows
how to weave

the sustaining belt
the broken zone

hundred tasseled girdle
ancient vest

the skirt & blouse
of office girls

um bi
li cal
cord

pubic string
let them know

hanging thread

net & ret

twisted grass
liquid thread

make them rot

nettle fold

tiny strands
rotten soft

*

make them live

cords creating
swollen skirt

wet string

tiny strands
magnified

they awaken
drenched

PAUL VIOLI

STRANGER ON A TRAIN

India, 1968

The train speeds toward Raxaul and the Nepal border while in a dream I watch her wade toward me through a motionless pool, smiling, holding her hair, her long brown hair away from her eyes; holding her skirt high above her knees. I'm basking in the serenity of it all, the humid haze, and I listen to myself tell her, making a weather report sound bland and intimate at the same time, "Yes, partly hazy, sunny and mild this morning." She agrees, and as the pool expands and I watch her step out of it onto what is now the shoreline of a golden sea, my hand grazes the front pocket of my dungarees and feels nothing. Wallet gone. I wake up instantly and see my pants sliced from waist to knee in one straight, clean, thin cut. I see the three of them seated across from me, the frayed cloth twisted, turbaned around their bony heads. They look nervous, sheepish, but I can't see their hands, can't tell which one holds the knife, the razor, whatever they had used. Something's about to happen. The speeding train swerves hard the moment we jump at each other. I grab one, he grabs me and we stumble and whirl around the cabin. The others disappear. I can't let go, I want my money. He knows it and he starts yelling as we slam into the wall. He's yelling over, toward the bench, trying to get me to look there, where I'd been sleeping. The wallet lies wrenched open underneath it. We're clutching, flinging each other around the cabin. I let go, and backward he flies, out the open door, off the train. Rupee notes, mine, fly out of him—feathers from a shot-gunned bird. I see him hung rag-tag, freeze-framed out there, his long white smock spread in the windblast. His eyes bulging, his mouth stretched, he screams like a fish out of water, he drops. The ground roars after him in a blur. Clickety-clack, clickety-clack, clickety-clack.

[from *Selected Accidents, Pointless Anecdotes*]

DIANE WAKOSKI

THE TANGO LESSON

Lights in the cinema theater come up; only a
few of us, like the cans of hominy in a cupboard left when
everything popular has been eaten,
still sit there. We are women, except one
sleeping fat man in suspenders,
and most of us are fat too, as summer ears of maize.
The bulging polyester (do they still make it?)
pants suit in the row behind me crunched popcorn and
crackled her
bag like frying tortillas throughout
the entire film,
but it didn't matter. The music
obliterated everything, as I huddled in my own
discreet elastic waisted denim trousers and baggy jacket.
First it was "Dirty Dancing" that I went back and saw
four times, and which some woman in Detroit said in a
newspaper article
that she saw 104 times while on a reducing diet.
Why did she need to diet? When I watched it, I *was*
the doctor's slim daughter on vacation at Grossinger's
transformed into the spangled Merengué dancer, lifted in tulle
up in the air to show Daddy how good she was.

Then came "Strictly Ballroom," more literary, more
sepia toned, yet wild with its Australian satire on
Apollonian order, the English world of regulation Ballroom
Dance, the irony of Latin Dances performed by rigid rules,
the begging for a passionate
Pass Dobles.
Once HE puts his princely hand on

HER Cinderella waist,
as tight as the silk inside a raw
ear of corn, she
moves with the natural precision of its rows
of perfect kernels. Old
and fat women, like her grandmother in this Latin family,
carry the flamenco cane into each swipe
of a broom. The competition now
is about love.
The dance scenes were
the real sex scenes. Correct that.
It was learning
to dance
that was so sexy. Maybe the reciprocity of teaching
and learning–they are the ultimate acts of love making?

The lights simmer, modulate up in the theater. We are the
same women, I the Goddess of Corn,
too old for a life of passion
or dance.
But not for other forms of
teaching and learning.
In the movie palace, we are still all women:
Prim, prissy, scholarly and now-old tamale hips Diane.
Other women with pimpled faces
or dowdy bodies, sexless thin women in stick dresses,
parched corn women, corn husk dolls,
fat women in tents, mostly women watching
transformations.
Usually we are watching the rules of the perfect-bodied
    Apollonian world
being over-turned by messy, yet more beautiful Dionysian
dancers, who dance to live,
who more precisely and beyond rules, define the possibility
    of
"orgy," "abandonment," "ecstasy"
as they dance, dance, dance
for joy,
for love,

making love,
yes, transcending sex.
Though in the movies, even yours Sally, they get that
too. For the viewers, myself and
these other women, it's food.
Our creamed corn eyes
melting on to the screen as we watch
the dancers.

Next there is your film, "The Tango Lesson,"
about making art, but it's the same lesson of Apollonian
rigidity and order, giving away to passion.
Only when she, played by you Sally Potter, dances in the club
    does HE see her
and even then he takes HER to the professional exhibition
    dance stage
and grinds HER with the rules she cannot heartily follow.
This film is for intellectuals,
but it's too romantic for them. Too corny.
They think it's about love,
when it's really about dance. Or they
think it's about dance,
when it's really about love.
Kind of wild,
no wonder you made an unpopular film, Sally.
No takers: a romantic film
about learning to tango
which is really about finding out how important it is
to be Jewish?

Now there is "Dance With Me" that I've
already seen twice
during this, its
opening week in my home town. I sit
through the entire credits at the end
each time
and find the
usual assortment of women,
like myself still there, waking with me

like wet cornmeal,
out of this film . The boy from Cuba
searching for his father. This is the first of these
movies with a boy so beautiful you want
to cry. He's played by a thirty-eight-year-old actor/ *that*
fact makes me really cry.
Attractive actors of course in all the other films,
but in this one the boy is a young Tyrone Power with a Cuban
accent,
a Tom Cruise, a Rock Hudson, even a young Elvis.
And when he dances the rumba or the cha cha cha in his
black and white Zoot Suit shoes, in the
Cuban club in Houston, Texas,
you are moving in your seat with him,
cob knocking, fields full of goddess grain, corn inspired,
you are practically out in the aisle
of the theater it's so hard to sit still. You realize that you are
wasting your life, or since
you are sixty,
that you have already wasted your life.
That finally you know you should never have allowed yourself
to find
any way to let life interfere with dance.

You remember that your old bookkeeper mother met your
young sailor father
disastrously, of course,
shades of Maenads, satyrs, firelight
at a dance. A public dance hall she went to on weekends,
filled with sailors, on the Long Beach pier, in Southern
California,
in the late thirties. I was conceived I am sure
after they went dancing which accounts for this strange
streak
of joy that runs through me, the desire to dance.

I tell myself as the lights come up
with the last moments of salsa Cubana ringing out of the
stereo

that I am not pathetic like the other women there in the
theater. I am the Corn Goddess.
I may look pathetic,
but that's because I am old and not thin like a tortilla.
Of course I also have a face, stiff as if dried with the corn
starch solution
in which we used to dip our crinoline petticoats
when I was a teen-ager.
But I am not bereft of joy.
Goddess joy.
I am still the Southern California girl
who danced with excitement each summer
when she got to go to the yearly La Habra Corn Festival.

In the corridors of the mall I almost dance
out to the car to drive home and tell my husband the movie
was just as good the second time
as the first. I might even
go again tomorrow.
One more time.
Treat myself to one more
ecstatic fling,
rolled in cornmeal, flaming with chunky
salsa pumps, dancing the polenta mysteries in this
ballroom I always enter
through the veil
of films like
"Dirty Dancing,"
"Strictly Ballroom,"
"Dance With Me," and
Sally Potter's "The Tango Lesson".

ANNE WALDMAN

from MARRIAGE: A SENTENCE

Say "tree" say "on the hill". Say "game" say it is "over". Say [turning to her] "the hand marks the seconds". Say "the hand marks the hours". Say "the horse in the harness". Say "insatiable appetite". Say "tuning fork". Say "came off the desert looking for water". Say "the messenger's narrative". Say [turning to him] "thirsty for home & hearth". Put your feet up take a load off. Say "marriage is always timely". Marriage was on clypsedric time. Stops one from always moving around. Are you still an umbilicus? No, a roving spirit a free agent an independent entity a marvelous conglomeration of tendencies the hairiest bag of water a water carrier a carriage trader with flute & flask before city sidewalks were wood trains run through me hear them at night? A two-note Sally mule train Sally ghost of a fickle lover a small time settler panning for gold with a Sally by his side. I am also the combined spoils of war. This is market time. To make a deal a fair exchange. I am a couple. This is market time. A gin fizz rupture. Psyches pitted against each other for spoils of war. I am a slave trader & she's my sex slave a party girl an old flame in transit. And to mark the time for Cold War objectives isn't marriage timely now? Musical partitions separate the girls from the wives. Jazz is her sex religion. Notes in frazzled mind. Say "radio" say "comes on a wave" say "singing voices". This is five minutes away. Say "Justice of the Peace". This is an hour. This is long. Come here. Touch me. Do you want me? For keeps? Turn over the pages in the brain. This is paper. Put it in writing, a "contractual nuptial". This is magic. This is something borrowed. This is what you can say is "god". Shift the load to the Lord. No this is something needs a Marxist blessing.

—by candle's light a bedouin—

Yearning in his voice man to man man on man had remembered I only wash dishes, & laughed, man to man was like in pictures you make a case take a stand for the benefits of survival's kind palimony. He is gentlemanly young erudite discreet they are friends & flirting amours dear marriage come later. A maestro gaze, he makes dances, he ambulatory films, had remembered and said now it is final now, a final illness, shifts from man to man in this culture so let's marry before it gets late. Overstuffed ready chair opera gloves paperwork footlocker, a carriage trade stands for myths together. Postcards from berlin or the jewelbox theater La Fenice in Venezia where you in marriage watched Figaro burnt down. He dies he wishes on the Metropolitan opera steps. One last diva stand. And when you just say opera how trivializing it gets what opera. It was Pelleas et Melisande of Debussy. What man what death what couple. His name in subtext is Warren. Crawled down there someone said who loves him like that he was mad for the place & music ringing always in an ear. Strauss is a favorite or maybe it's the aria from the one when the woman was a man maybe Strauss again. And Lucia Lamermoor someone said was one of mine was what he said.

& after this man is gone try the different heartbreak tones of Saigon.

—male gaze male—

KEITH WALDROP

NATURAL BRIDGE

Climbs on the first spider that
comes along. Sees himself distinctly
on the same road, riding towards. Strange
peace of mind. Land of Commotion.

Enlarges, gets stronger, heavier, and along with this
the pillows get bigger. Earth as it was, without
railroads, the Eiffel Tower, the Suez Canal and
with the Island of Krakatoa, before 1883.

Feels he is a soap-bubble, or that his limbs are
made of glass, or describes himself in
countless ways. Dreams of icy satellites
on ancient extinguished suns.

Like a doll from Nuremberg. Head floating free,
half a mile behind. Systems no telescope
can resolve into individual stars. Exceptionally
three-dimensional and highly detailed.

Prefers the thick tangle of some
dwarf shrub. Affirms that another
person lies on his left side in the same
bed and wants to push him out.

Strips of light, spiralling like a tenacious
climbing plant. We possess, from this
period, pictures of animals, diluvial and
characteristic. New heaven and new earth.

The walls are simple, white, unornamented. In long
cases along these walls are dark stone
fragments, resembling broken animals. Terrible
teeth. Blood of grapes and mulberries.

What new impetus in the millions
of space and time? Provokes the elephants to
fight. And for every elephant a
thousand men. So decorated, at such expense.

ROSMARIE WALDROP

TOOL BOX

The gaze she knew even as a child envelops, the way velvet surrounds antlers in the period immediately preceding sexual aggression and mating. His attitude toward repetition casual—so many roses to suggest compulsion. But the definition[1] of terms like "attraction" or "palpable" depends on the enjambement of closed systems. The time you took, she wails, to open your arms, grow a beard, have rings under your eyes, wear a raincoat, swollen tongue, sigh, eyes downcast.

As a mature woman, Godiva knew all but one of her subjects would turn their eyes away from her humiliation, but my interest in the entire range of sexuality is genuine, quite genuine. If two or three cell bodies are gathered together they build suburbs of gray matter.[2] The whole system vibrates with red sky in progress, like sailor's delight minus part-time labor. Luminescence, she wails, mysteries, phenomena, sprouting likenesses, mirrors rampant, sunrise, porous color, out of phase gaze.

A naked little girl on a horse,[3] long tresses cover her body. My rash is now an unremovable garment covering my belly, buttocks and genitals in a wet flush of color. Here lies the difficulty: a closed system can never be a mattress. My eyes, my voice, she wails, the deep spiral of the stairs, the small sea shell you'd brought me, snail house, bone color, sound in my ear.

A child Godiva would fulfill the most exhibitionist Emperor's fantasy, he of the New Clothes, but where is he? I found myself admiring the chocolate-colored trousers and yellow shirt which, irritating my gray matter, caused an explosion involving many cells at once, like lightning or an epileptic fit. And while physics

does not explicitly define the body as rigid,[4] the whole system changed from rain to sleet. Panic, she wails, lilies made up yellow, garlands, wintergreen, palm leaves, seasonal emblems, splinter of red stone, open sky.

Notes

1. useful if inadequate
2. like chronic abnormalities that irritate
3. poorly fed
4. I'll never forget the mechanical chess player in his turban

WANG PING

SECOND CHANCE

The hospital called.
"Good news from your test.
The baby looks good. No Down's syndromes
or other defects. And it's a boy."

"Thank you, thank you," I repeated in a daze.
The phone beeps in my hand,
signaling me to hang up or dial,
or simply clasp my hands in gratitude to
my good fortune.

I've been hiding in baggy clothes, telling
friends I put on weight from depression.
It has to be kept a secret until the test is performed.
If the fetus goes wrong
I need to grieve in private
and hide the shame of my womb,
from which a life has to be torn because of my age.

They say bad babies are caused by old eggs.
Born into the ovaries with a fixed number at birth,
the eggs become sticky after a woman reaches thirty,
and may not split evenly in the middle, sending an extra
    x or y
to one half, causing a lack in the other.
According to my doctor, an expert on genetics,
the ratio for such wrong doing rockets
after she hits forty: 1:60 for a 41 year-old,
1:30 for 42, and 1:6 for 45-year-olds.
He stopped, his finger on the chart

tapped out what he couldn't say:
This is what they call the ticking of the biological clock.

How about the sperm, I broke the silence,
hoping I could somehow make my partner share some blame.
Ah, the sperm, the sperm are never a problem, I was told.
Born anew each month, fresh and vital as always,
this is true even for an eighty-year-old.

Thus, I closed my mouth and lay down on the cot
and took the test at my own cost, wondering
if insurance covers viagra because of this masculine
advantage.
As the long needle penetrated the uterus and placenta,
I wished my partner would just disappear.
Why did he have to witness this humiliation
alloted to the female body?
In the dark sea of amniotic fluid, the fetus floated,
bones transparent against the screen, the mouth sucking,
the heart pumping like an eye blinking.
Suddenly the fetus reached for the needle. The doctor
jumped,
ready to withdraw the tube. But it only grabbed its knee,
then released. The feet kicked and stretched,
showing off the sex between his legs.
I smiled at this delightful thing, so tiny and perfect,
forgetting for a moment the statistics, the bill, and my chance
of hitting the biological lottery.

The doctor held three tubes of liquid under the light,
clear, straw-colored, like pee.
"It's urine from the fetus," he said, reading my mind.
With that he'd grow culture for ten days
to decide the fetus' fate as well as the mother's.

If fate is a strange thing,
waiting is then the real pain.
I wished I didn't have to cook, wash, eat or sleep,
so I could keep my fingers crossed for a blessing.

I also wanted to break them all so I couldn't chew
my nails when the dark thought loomed over my brain.
For ten days, life stood still,
only hope hung upon the faith—
a thin cliff of chance. I prayed,
for the first time, promising everything I have.
"Take my adjunct teaching, my $2,000 life saving, my writing,
even my happiness, but give me a normal baby, please.
Is that too much to ask?" I shouted in the darkness.
But I knew, deep down, it's not just a financial problem,
or the responsibility of caring for a child
who would remain a child forever.
My anger is the shame of my body, used, aged, abnormal,
and the fear to be blamed, to be no longer desired.

The phone is finally silent,
after a storm of beeping and the operator's
urgent advice. I put it back to its socket,
wondering if Alea, Latin for dice, or luck,
would sound too weird for a name,
and how I should tell the news to my friend
who is still keeping on her desk
the ashes of her four-month-old fetus, still cleansing
her body daily with pills and herbs, still waiting,
with all her strength, for a second chance.

ELIOT WEINBERGER

SALAAM *SULFUR*

It's undeniable that everywhere—and especially in the U.S., where literary writers generally do not appear in newspapers or mass-circulation periodicals—the "little" magazine kept literature alive in the 20th century. And it is safe to say that *Sulfur* was the last significant American little magazine of the century. What is strange is that it may well be the last significant little magazine of them all—that is, in the printed version as we know it—for the Internet has now rendered them obsolete.

Difficult to believe, as the technophiles are proclaiming, that the book is dead, for there is as yet no more convenient and, by our present tastes, aesthetically pleasing "information package." What is certain is that its means of production will change. For example, the corporations are already testing high-speed printing and binding machines, which could become as ubiquitous as ATMs: one puts in a credit card, types in the author and title, and in a few minutes a printed and bound book appears. This will not be the end of conglomerate publishing, which will forever control the larger markets, but it could mean an unimaginable democratization of the publishing process. In the 18th century, when newspapers began publishing letters to the editor, every citizen became a potential published writer. In the 21st, everyone will be able to be the author of a book. It is both a kind of Utopia and a nightmare.

The technology, as it now exists, makes the reading of more than ten or fifteen pages at a stretch wearisome; no one wants to settle down with *The Man Without Qualities* on a laptop. But it is perfect for the contents of a magazine, where one can browse, then read or print out what one likes. Though the Net, for the moment, will not render the mass-circulation magazine—with its consumption in the interstices of transient boredom—obsolete, it is, in many ways, superior to printing for a little magazine.

Consider *Sulfur* next to *Jacket*, John Tranter's e-zine from Australia (www.jacket.zip.com.au). (I choose *Jacket* because I happen to know

it best, and publish there regularly—along with many *Sulfur* contributors—though other examples could serve.) An issue of *Sulfur* costs around $9000 to produce and mail. After nearly twenty years of publishing, the print run of an issue was 2,000 and its paid subscribers around 800—moderately successful for an American little magazine. The inherent deficit kept it chained to endless grant applications and fund-raising. *Jacket*—produced, like nearly all little magazines, by unpaid labor—costs nothing beyond the initial expense of the computer equipment and the small monthly server fee. And, in its first two years, it has registered some 200,000 "hits." As a contributor, I've simply never had as much response to anything I've published elsewhere (including pieces in large-circulation magazines such as *The Nation* or *Village Voice):* besides letters and e-mails from strangers and comments on other websites, everyone I run into seems to have read it.

Sulfur was accessible to those in urban centers and certain college towns, and those willing to pay for an issue sight unseen (subscription); *Jacket* is available free to anyone with computer access (which will soon be almost everyone in the industrial world). Moreover, printed little magazines lived in relative isolation, the news of their contents spreading by word of mouth. If your interest was piqued by writer X or subject Y, there was almost no way to know that X or Y was published or discussed in *Sulfur*. That same writer or topic in an e-zine like *Jacket* automatically becomes part of a reference network of links and search engines, instantly sending you on to the appropriate page.

Above all, the Web brings back the immediacy and tentativeness of what the little magazine should be, and now so rarely is. Little magazines have become far too genteel: the polished works of each contributor lined up like gravestones or museum pieces, with no commentary or writings that are not "art." They have become books, or something less than books: periodic anthologies that are inferior to other anthologies because they must be drawn from work that is otherwise unpublished and that happens to cross the editor's desk. The e-zine, however, is a potential return to the primary function of the little magazine: works in progress, comments, letters, discussions, manifestoes, polemics, debates, and a general sloppiness: a return to process over product. And its speed creates the magazine Olson dreamed of in his letters to Corman about Origin: "getting the work out while it's hot." The things I send to *Jacket* are usually posted the next day.

While the Web will take a long time replacing the existing forms of mass media, it is already the primary medium for people with specialized interests. It is where the sufferer of a rare disease or the Pola Negri

fan in Kansas finds a kindred spirit in Bolivia. "Good literature" (as James Laughlin used to call it) will forever be a specialized interest, and it will be forever useless to decry the popularity or proliferation of lesser vehicles. With The Web. the surprising news may well be that there are more fellow enthusiasts scattered around the planet than we think.

Salaam *Sulfur,* and salaam to its reincarnation in a thousand websites.

ALLEN S. WEISS

WOUNDS

for Clayton Eshleman

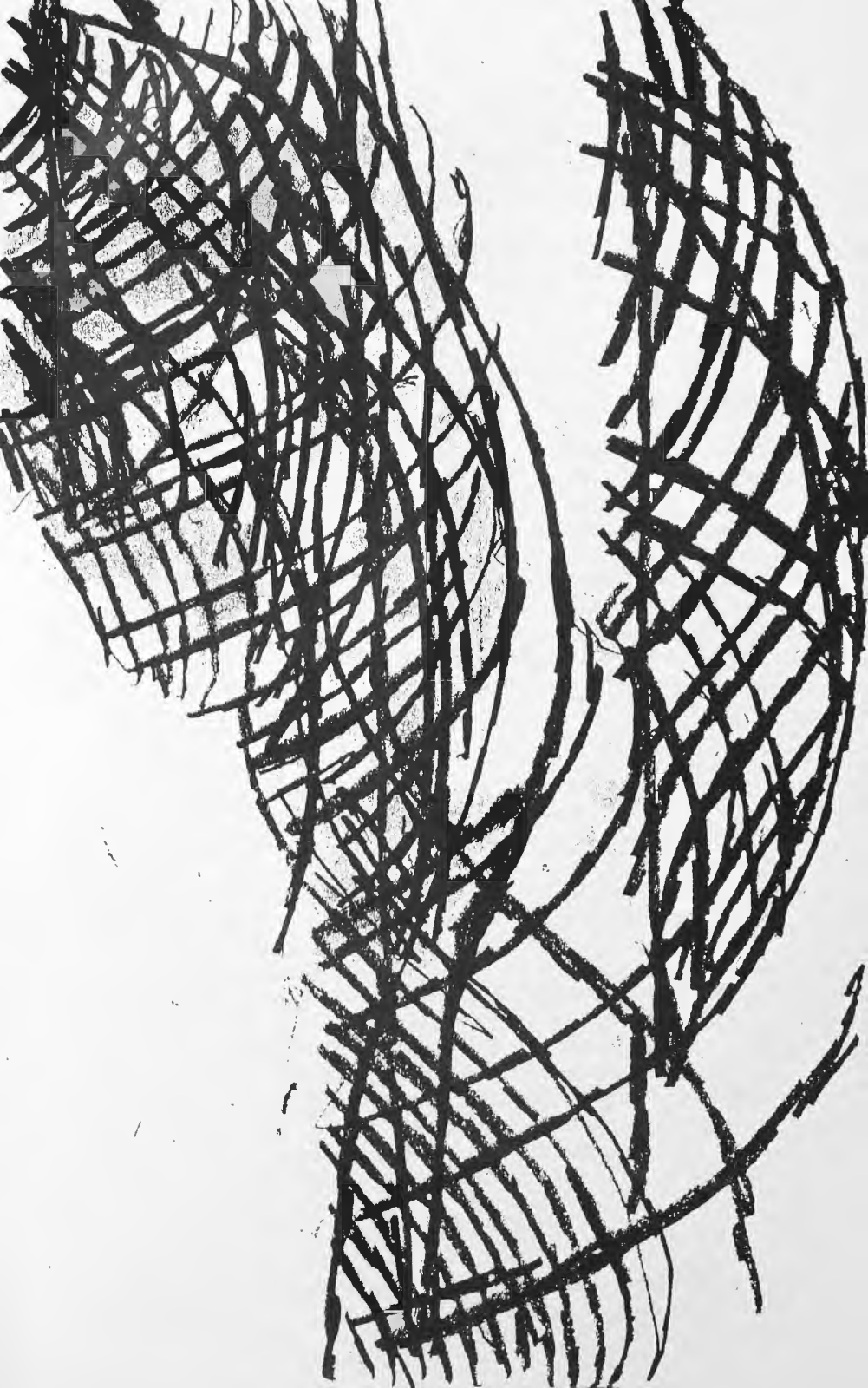
Consider the passion and pain, the memory and desire, represented by each rusted, twisted nail hammered into a fetish. . .My body was Pandemonium, abode of all demons, infernal riot. Chaos shattered my astragalus. Hyperion impaled my solar plexus. Dionysus smashed my tympanum. Nemesis ruptured my spleen. Tantalus infected my conjunctiva. Cronus slashed my corpora cavernosa. Abraxas bound my zygomaticus minor. Baal rotted my spermatic fascia. Beelzebub poisoned my blood. Chimera clogged my jejunum. Gog defiled my sacrum. Gorgon shattered my vitreous body. Lilith chewed my glottis. Lucifer boiled my aqueous humor. Quetzacoatl choked my labyrinth. Yahweh ripped my flexor sublimis digitorum. . .

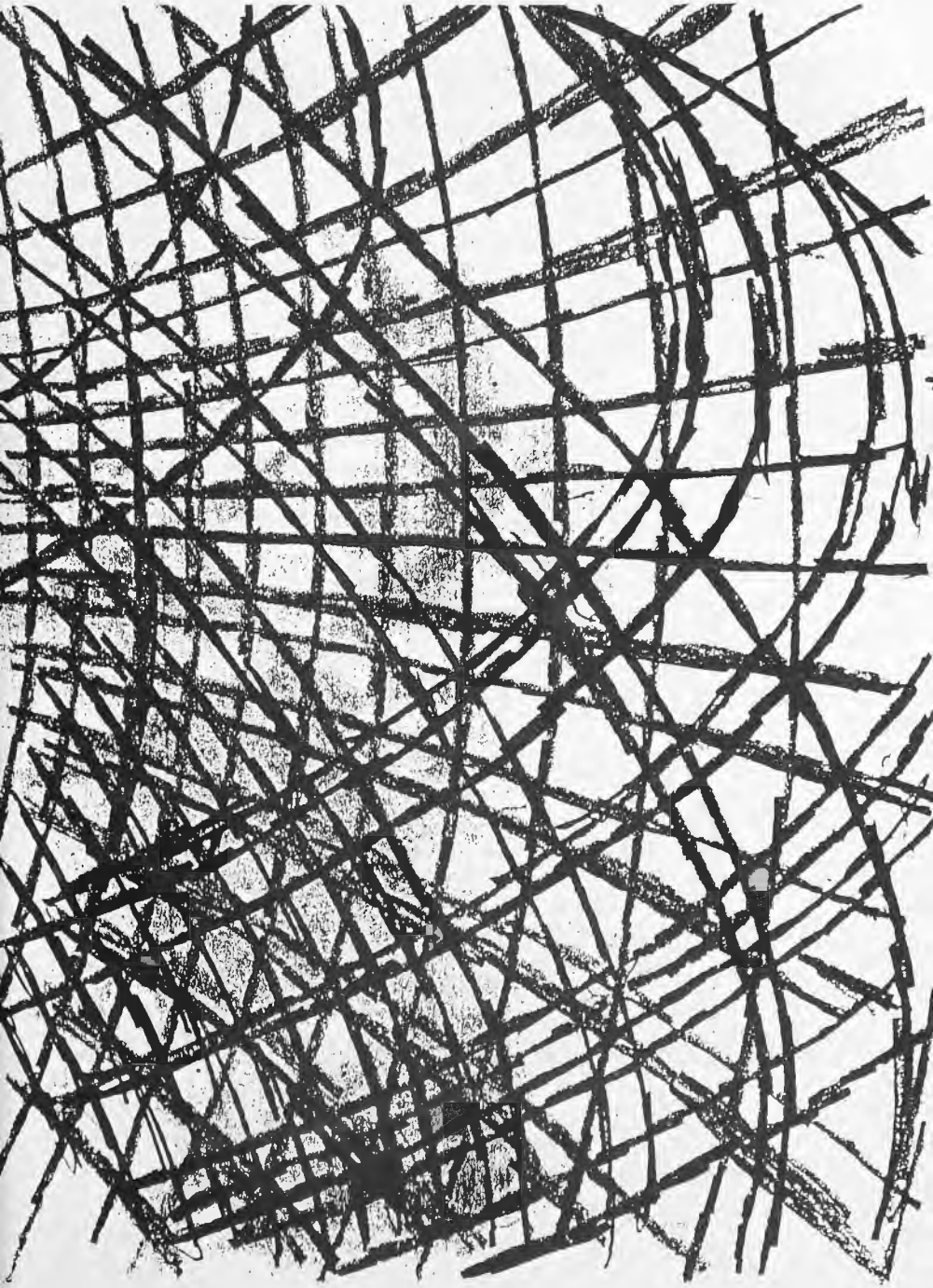
o dedi
a dada orzoura
o dou zoura
u dada skizi

Corpus Angelicuu—degeneration of the gods, where across the millenia the sacred lingam is corrupted into a dildo—Corpus Diabolicus. There was no way to resist, as they attempted *to sweep me away in their sexual hyperaesthesia, their libidinous mannerism, their salacious erotic sensibilisation, their carnal obsession with the abject and infectuous flesh, their phallic copulative delirium, their concrete corporeal erotisation, their complete affective beastialisation, their total sexual corporisation, their crass hypodermic invagination, their integral erotic debauchery, their totally profligate abomination, their unveiled criminal fornication.* I was reduced to a heap of poorly assembled organs: I possessed neither force nor form; I was beset by a profound psychopompomania.

libidinary cupidity
Liminary copulosity
capitulary libido

Unlike Saint Benedict, my doctors did not see beauty in the rose's thorn as it pierces the flesh to drive away those voluptuous visions which haunt holy men.





MARJORIE WELISH

TWO POEMS

TEXTILE 7

And as in the mind
a gyroscope
through and beyond gossip

"Of what is past, or passing, or to come."
And its corollaries
And its copyright

as in the estate of "Gates of Hell"
cooling off
original copies.

As posthumous descriptions
the body in dark and light descant
wax met metal

and lost. As he left them as he let them go:
ash let bodies be copied cordially.
"We've met before."

We have lived in emphasis
to establish the mettle of nature
for somewhere

literary entities have disembarked.
"Landscapes," they are called.
Culled

because on land
—"That's not a garden, that's a sanatorium for plants"
a sanatorium for flora

in attendance
has found its women's literature.
False positives

". . .as a late cultural arrival. . ."
as, for example, locale
or tanning

even as a reticent reader works through such maneuvers.

TEXTILE 8

As posthumous
description "Of what is past, or passing. . ."
past perfect

in attendance, dancer from dance:
we are its offshoot
almost

thoroughly passage throughout passing face;
step-down
with steep

passion at the summit, the summary.
Similar kinds are common
common

and demonstrably cultural at the close of the poem

whereas
in the beginning was a natural reference table
my table

interpenetrating vocabularies
winged embroideries
episodes

of nature and culture varying inversely in verse
in bas-relief
in relief

as of
aged phrase; add new rhetoric beneath
add great

settlement "From Abstraction to Design Argument"
supplement
subscript

even as
ear to glacier, glassware give and take, deal justly.
Or adjust

"sheen"
(in the sense of "pretext")
or make sense of. . .

explicit destination and planet, lanes
passing lanes closely annexed;
annex

prompting lanes
lanes with the propensity for assent
promised ascent.

C.D. Wright

ELATION WASHED OVER OUR ABSENCE TOWARD EVERYTHING IN THE INCREASING DARKNESS

The soft coloration of his longing in the indifferent
environment has never deserted me.
My husband saving the spermaceti to light
our eyestrings. My husband charting my obsessions
with characteristic cool. Singing sacerdotally
in the shower, my husband intoning every cleft in my skin,
Our syncopated breathing. My husband who flew often
at night as a child. Above the very ground
of our writing (even as power poles were falling
on volvos). My husband equally popular with women
of all ages. His nail parings, his running legs, his scriptoria.
O his ludic hard head. Who cut down
his own hair with a bone-handled knife. His rack
of gorgeous unworn ties. My husband touching
even the insular men; whenever fear bred
its mushrooms under rugs, a cleaning frenzy commenced.
Our bed irrigated with my blood. Watching me burn
from within; tendering his cross pen. O predominately
white guilt. Whenever it rained

after h.l. hix

JOEL-PETER WITKIN

TWO PHOTOGRAPHS

Beauty has Three Nipples, Berlin, 1998

Interrupted Reading, Paris, 1999

Contributor Notes

WILL ALEXANDER is the author of *Asia & Haiti* (Sun & Moon Press, 1995) and *Towards the Primeval Lightning Field* (O Books, 1998). BRUCE ANDREWS is the subject of Aerial 9: Contemporary Poetics as Critical Theory, an anthology edited by Rod Smith on his work. GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE has informed Sulfur that he is happy that R. Padgett continues to translate his poetry. The ANTONIN ARTAUD piece is from Volume IX of Artaud's Complete Works published by Gallimard in Paris. JEAN-PAUL AUXEMERY is the translator of Olson, Blau DuPlessis, Creeley, and Eshleman; his most recent collection of poetry is *Parafe* (1994). STEPHEN BARBER has recently published his second book on Artaud: *The Screaming Body* (Creation Books, London, 1999). SUSAN BEE, who will show new paintings at A.I.R. Gallery, NYC, in April 2000, is the co-editor of the M/E/A/N/I/N/G anthology forthcoming from Duke University Press. New Directions will publish a new collection of BEI DAO's poems, *Unlock,* in 2000. CHARLES BERNSTEIN has recently edited the spring 1999 issue of Boundary 2: 99 Poets/1999: An International Poetics Symposium. LORNA BIEBER writes: "I have been working on the 'Homes and Offices' photo series since 1991. They are infused with a sense of longing and loss and evoke memories both real and imagined." On April 18, 2000, an opera that I have heard is called *The Last Supper,* with libretto by ROBIN BLASER, is opening in Berlin. RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS's *Drafts 1-38, Toll* will be published by Wesleyan University Press in 2001. Each poem from the new "fold" of *Drafts* (39–58), currently in process, is dedicated to a specific person. ANDRE BRETON opened his first major collection of poems, *Earthlight* (1923), with his narration of "Five Dreams." The three dreams translated here, from roughly the same period, were published in the first issue of *La Revolution surrealiste* (1924) and have not been collected since. HAYDEN CARRUTH's most recent books are *Beside the Shadblow Tree* (1999) and *Reluctantly* (1998). Pierre Joris's translation of PAUL CELAN's *Lightduress* will be published by Sun & Moon Press in 2000. Wesleyan University Press will publish a single volume version of AIME CESAIRE's *Notebook of a*

Return to the Native Land, in Clayton Eshleman's and Annette Smith's revised/reformatted translation. MAXINE CHERNOFF's most recent novel is *A Boy in Winter* (Crown, 1999); she edits New American Writing with Paul Hoover. PAUL CHRISTENSEN's *West of the American Dream: An Encounter with Texas* will be published this year by Texas A&M University Press. NORMA COLE's *Crosscut Universe: Writing on Writing From France* is forthcoming from Burning Deck. WILLIAM CORBETT's current book of poems is *Boston Vermont* (Zoland Books); he is an editor of the magazine Pressed Wafer. MICHAEL DAVIDSON's most recent books of poetry are *Post Hoc* (Avenue B) and *The Arcades* (O Books). LYDIA DAVIS is translating Proust. MICHEL DEGUY continues to edit Poesie in Paris. We have no news of ROBERT DUNCAN. GEORGE ECONOMOU'S latest book is *Century Dead Center;* he is a 1999-2000 NEA Fellow in Poetry. MELVIN EDWARDS currently has a one man show at CDS Gallery in NYC. Wesleyan University Press will publish a new edition of CLAYTON ESHLEMAN's translation of César Vallejo's *Trilce* in 2000. DAN FEATHERSON'S poetry is to be found in Nedge, Witz, and Zazil; he will guest-edit A.bacus in 2001. KENWARD ELMSLIE's most recent publication is *Cyberspace,* with visuals by Trevor Winkfield (Granary Books); in 1998, *Routine Disruptions,* selected poems & lyrics, was brought out by Coffee House Press. Part of ALLEN FISHER's *Gravity as a consequence of shape* called *Brixton Fractals* was reprinted in Vancouver in 1999; he lives in Hereford and London. PHILLIP FOSS's most recent collection of poems is *Chromatic Defacement* (Char Press). KATHLEEN FRASER'S most recent book is *Translating the Unspeakable / Poetry and the Innovative Necessity* (University of Alabama Press, 2000). GENE FRUMKIN's latest book is *The Old Man Who Swam Away and Left Only his Wet Feet;* he lives in Albuquerque. WOLFGANG GIEGERICH is a Jungian analyst in private practice near Munich; his book *The Soul's Logical Life: Towards a Rigorous Notion of Psychology* appeared in 1999 from Peter Lang. ALLEN GINSBERG's unpublished essay in this issue will appear in *Deliberate Prose: Selected Essays 1952-1995* (Harper Collins, 2000). LEON GOLUB comments: "I would say I have four totem animals, the sphinx (if that's an animal), the lion; the eagle, and the dog. The dog is relatively recent." BARBARA GUEST published three books in 1999: *If So, Tell Me* (Reality St. Editions, London), *Rocks on a Platter* (Wesleyan), and *The Confetti Trees* (Sun & Moon). A book on BERNARD HEIDSIECK's work, *Bernard Heidsieck, poesie action* (Editions Jean-Place) appeared in 1996. LINDSAY HILL is the co-editor, with Paul Naylor, of a new literary magazine, Facture. ANSELM HOLLO's most recent book is *Caws & Causeries: Around Poetry and Poets* (La Alameda/University of New

Mexico Press, 1999). PAUL HOOVER's books include *Totem and Shadow: New & Selected Poems* (Talisman House); he edited the anthology *Postmodern American Poetry* (W.W. Norton). MICHAEL IVES performs with F'loom. PIERRE JORIS's recent publications include *Notes Toward a Nomadic Poetics* (Spanner 38, Hereford, England) and *h.j.r.* (OtherWind Press, Ann Arbor). ANDREW JORON is the author of *Science Fiction* (Pantograph Press, 1992) and *The Removes* (Hard Press, 1999). JANET KAUFFMAN's *Characters on the Loose* was published by Greywolf in 1998. ROBERT KELLY's *The Time of Voice* (Black Sparrow) appeared in 1998. About R.B. KITAJ, Robert Hughes, in Time, has written: "Kitaj draws better than almost anyone else alive." Since 1971 PAUL LAFFOLEY has been the Director of Projects at The Boston Visionary Cell, Inc; his work is shown by Kent Fine Art in NYC. Sulfur is proud to have published prose and poetry by the great Cuban writer JOSE LEZAMA LIMA in several issues. LINH DINH is somewhere in Vietnam. NATHANIEL MACKEY's most recent book is *Whatsaid Serif* (City Lights, 1998). JACKSON MAC LOW's most recent book is *Two Plays: The Marrying Maiden* and *Verdurous Sanguinaria* (Sun & Moon); he taught last summer at the Naropa Institute in Boulder. MATSUTANI will have a retrospective exhibition in Kobe this year. ANA MENDIETA was on the cover of Sulfur #1; she is represented by LeLong Gallery, NYC. HENRI MICHAUX's book *Les Ravagés,* a verbal "portrait of psychiatric patients and the images they paint," was originally published by Fata Morgan in 1976; it was reissued in a Gallimard edition, *Chemins cherchés, chemins perdus, Transgressions,* in 1981. CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON's collection of short prose, *In the Mirror of the Eighth King,* was published by Sun & Moon Press in 1999. BRIAN NISSEN's most recent exhibition was at El Museo del Barrio in NYC from January to March, 1998. VALERE NOVARINA is one of France's leading playwrights; his work is regularly performed at the Festival d'Avignon, the Festival d'Automne, and internationally. The present translation constitutes the end of *L'animal du temps.* JOHN OLSON published two chapbooks in 1999: *Eggs & Mirrors* and *Logo Lagoon.* JENNY PENBERTHY's edition of *Lorine Niedecker: Collected Works* is due from U of Cal Press this year. She is currently preparing Niedecker's "Lake Superior" notes for publication. ROCHELLE OWENS' newest books are *New & Selected Poems 1961-1996,* and *Luca: Discourse on Life & Death* (Junction Press). New Directions will publish a new collection of MICHAEL PALMER's poetry in 2000: *The Promises of Glass.* MARJORIE PERLOFF's most recent books are *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (1996) and *Poetry On & Off the Page: Essays for Emergent Occasions* (1998). MARK POLIZZOTTI's *The New Life* (Alyscamps

Press, Paris & London) appeared in 1998. RICHARD SIEBURTH's *Selected Writings of Gerard de Nerval* was published by Penguin Classics in 1999; he is currently working on a translation of Scève's *Delie*. GUSTAF SOBIN has recently published *Luminous Debris (Reflecting on Vestige in Provence)* (U of Cal Press) and *The Fly-Truffler*, a novel, from Norton. TINA ROTENBERG is the founding director of an arts and culture projects for children in the public schools. She teaches at Mills College in Oakland and lives in Berkeley. JOHN TAGGART's new book, a single long poem, *When the Saints* (Talisman House) is out this winter. KIKULI VELARDE's ceramics shown in this issue are from *Isichapuitu*, a 1998 show at the John Elder Gallery in NYC. She lives in Philadelphia. CECILIA VICUNA's most recent books are *QUIPOem/ The Precarious Art and Poetry of Cecilia Vicuna* (Wesleyan, 1997) and *Cloud-net* (Hallwalls, 1999). PAUL VIOLI's most recent book is *Fracas* (Hanging Loose); in 2000 Coffee House will publish his *Breakers*, a selection of longer poems. DIANE WAKOSKI's new work includes a new section of *Greed*, 40 pages long. She has also written a long poem about our ageist society, called "Perfume." ANNE WALDMAN's material in this issue is from *Marriage: A Sentence* to be published thls year in the Penguin Poets series. JAMES WANLESS is an English teacher who lives in Grosse Ile, MI. ALLEN WEISS has most recently published *Unnatural Horizons: Paradox and Contradiction in Landscape Architecture* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998) and has edited *Taste, Nostalgia* (Lusitania Press, 1997). He is currently staging a production of Novarina's *Theater of the Ears*.

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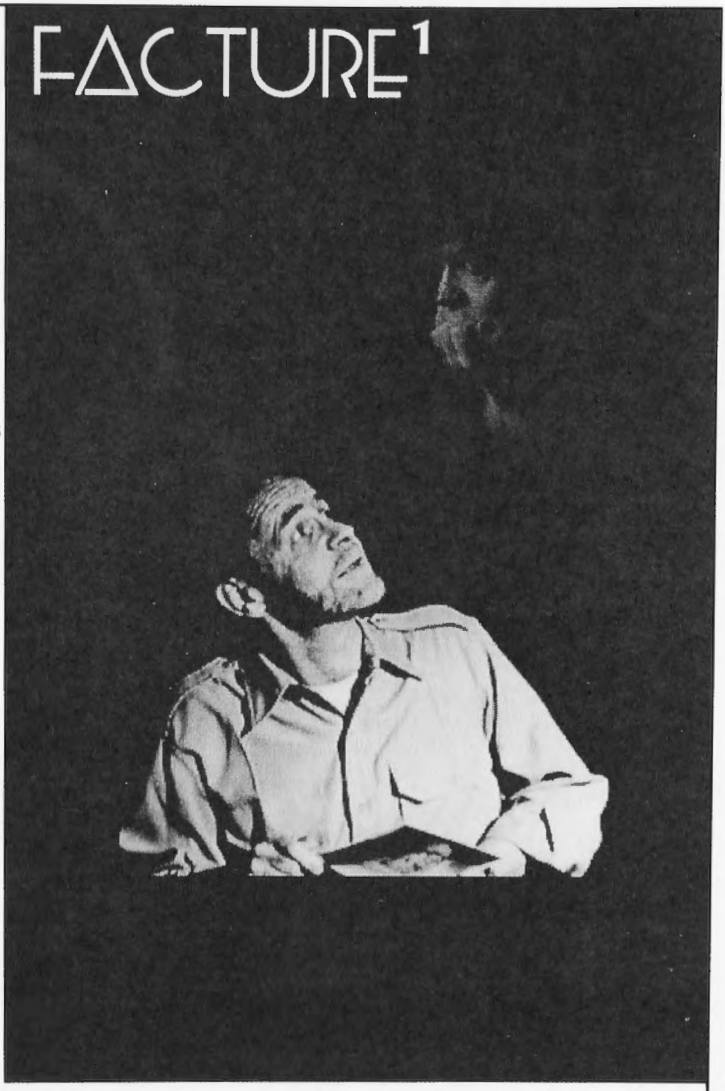

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Inaugural issue, featuring a special section on Ronald Johnson, including unpublished poems, excerpts from the poet's notebooks, and essays by Jed Rasula, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Mark Scroggins, and Eric Selinger. Plus new poetry by Will Alexander, Charles Bernstein, Clark Coolidge, Clayton Eshleman, Harryette Mullen, Sheila Murphy, Gustaf Sobin, and Nathaniel Tarn, among others. *Facture* will be published twice a year. Issues are $10 each, or $30 for a two-year subscription. Make checks payable to *Facture*. All correspondence should be sent to:
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